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Volume 129 Number 2

# PMLA

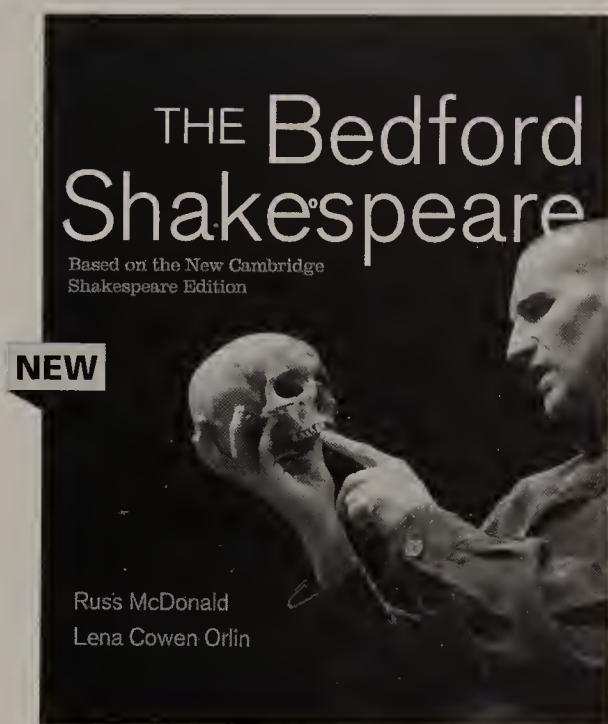


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March 2014  
Volume 129 Number 2

# PMLA

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*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*

Published five times a year by the association



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An online archive of *PMLA* issues from 1884 to 2008 is available through JSTOR ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)).

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# Contents

MARCH 2014

- 164 A Statement of Editorial Policy
- 165 Forthcoming in *PMLA*
- 165 Features in *PMLA*
- 166 Correction
- 167 **Guest Column—What Is True in Our World? A Revival**  
IMANI PERRY
- 
- 171 **Arresting Monstrosity: Polio, *Frankenstein*, and the Horror Film**  
DWIGHT CODR
- 188 **Louise Glück's Twenty-First-Century Lyric**  
REENA SASTRI
- 204 **Taking the Smooth with the Rough: Texture, Emotion, and the Other Postmodernism**  
PANSY DUNCAN
- 223 **Zuckerman/Roth: Literary Celebrity between Two Deaths**  
LOREN GLASS
- 
- theories and methodologies**
- 237 ***Chinua Achebe: A Tribute***  
Contributions by Elleke Boehmer, Rhonda Cobham-Sander, Uzoma Esonwanne, Harry Garuba, Eileen Julien, James Ogude, and Elaine Savory
- little-known documents**
- 257 **I Am Hemingway's Renata**  
ADRIANA IVANCICH  
TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION BY MARK CIRINO
- 267 **Playbill for George Lippard's *The Quaker City***  
INTRODUCTION BY SARI ALTSCHULER AND AARON M. TOBIASON
- 274 **Forum**  
MARCUS BULLOCK, OLIVIA C. HARRISON, HELENE MEYERS, AND BASEM L. RA'AD
- 282 In Memoriam
- 286 Index of Advertisers
- 311 Abstracts

## PUBLICATIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

[ Published five times a year ]

### VOLUMES ONLINE

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VOLS. 117–29 (2002–14), *MLAJournals.org*

### ONLINE INDEX

VOLS. 1–129 (1884–2014)  
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### PRINT INDEXES

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*PMLA* welcomes essays of interest to those concerned with the study of language and literature. As the publication of a large and heterogeneous association, the journal is receptive to a variety of topics, whether general or specific, and to all scholarly methods and theoretical perspectives. The ideal *PMLA* essay exemplifies the best of its kind, whatever the kind; addresses a significant problem; draws out clearly the implications of its findings; and engages the attention of its audience through a concise, readable presentation. Manuscripts in languages other than English are accepted for review but must be accompanied by a detailed summary in English (generally of 1,000–1,500 words) and must be translated into English if they are recommended to the Editorial Board. Articles of fewer than 2,500 words or more than 9,000 words are not considered for publication. The word count includes notes but excludes works-cited lists and translations, which should accompany foreign language quotations. The MLA urges its contributors to be sensitive to the social implications of language and to seek wording free of discriminatory overtones.

Only members of the association may submit articles to *PMLA*. For a collaboratively written essay to be eligible for submission, all coauthors must be members of the MLA. *PMLA* does not publish book reviews or new works of fiction, nor does it accept articles that were previously published in any language. An article is considered previously published if it appears in print or in an online outlet with the traits of publication, such as editorial selection of content, a formal presentation, and ongoing availability. Online contexts that typically lack these traits include personal Web pages, discussion groups, and repositories. Each article submitted is sent to two reviewers, usually one consultant reader and one member of the Advisory Committee. Articles recommended by these readers are then sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet periodically with the editor to make final decisions. Until a final decision is reached, the author's name is not made known to consultant readers, to members of the Advisory Committee and the Editorial Board, or to the editor. Because the submission of an article simultaneously to more than one refereed journal can result in duplication of the demanding task of reviewing the manuscript, it is *PMLA*'s policy not to review articles that are under consideration by other journals. An article found to have been simultaneously submitted elsewhere will not be published in *PMLA* even if it has already been accepted for publication by the Editorial Board.

Submissions, prepared according to the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, should be sent electronically or, in duplicate, as hard copy to the Managing Editor, *PMLA*, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (pmlasubmissions@mla.org). With each print submission please include a self-addressed envelope and enough postage for one copy to be returned. Authors' names should not appear on manuscripts; instead, a cover sheet, with the author's name and address and the title of the article, should accompany each manuscript. Authors should not refer to themselves in the first person in the submitted text or notes if such references would identify them; any necessary references to the author's previous work, for example, should be in the third person. If the contribution includes any



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## Features in *PMLA*

Manuscripts and correspondence related to the features described below should be sent to the Managing Editor, *PMLA*, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (pmlasubmissions@mla.org).

### Special Topic

Articles on the general topic are invited; the subtopics listed are provided by way of example and suggestion only. Submissions to *PMLA* must meet the requirements given in the statement of editorial policy.

### *Literature in the World*

*Deadline for submissions: 3 November 2014*

Coordinator: Simon Gikandi (Princeton Univ.)

*PMLA* invites essays on the nature and role of literature in a diverse and multilingual world. The special issue will seek to provide a critical reflection on the diversity of both dominant and less-taught languages and of their spheres of use, to engage with the vernacular and the indigenous as critical categories, and to consider conceptual or thematic structures that invite literary studies to move outside the rubrics of nation, state, and national language. The goals of the issue are to engage with literary expression in any language, tradition, and historical period outside mainstream movements and critical traditions and to open new avenues for thinking about what work literature does across linguistic and geographic zones. The issue will also address the changing nature of institutions of literary production in diverse traditions, the question of authorship, and the role of authors as subjects and agents of literature. The Editorial Board welcomes essays that move literary criticism, theory, and literary history toward new conversations about literatures in a multilingual world and define or redefine what literature means in the twenty-first century. How are questions of language and power played out in "other empires," such as the Russian, the Chinese, and the Japanese and the dominant African empires of the nineteenth century? What are the possibilities and limits of studying literature across languages and traditions? What does it mean for English, French, or Spanish to be creolized? What is the role of regional languages and their literatures in globalization? What happens when we change the direction of comparison from North-South to North-North or South-South? How does literature work in multilingual situations? What is the future of minor literatures and less-taught languages? How does literature function in primarily oral cultures? What is the role of translation in the circulation of literary cultures in different periods and places?

## Forthcoming in *PMLA*

### IN THE MAY ISSUE

"Editor's Column—Nelson Mandela: The Absent Cause"

MARIANNE HIRSCH. "Presidential Address 2014—Connective Histories in Vulnerable Times"

CHRISTOPHER CANNON. "From Literacy to Literature: Elementary Learning and the Middle English Poet"

LISA VOIGT AND ELIO BRANCAFORTE. "The Traveling Illustrations of Sixteenth-Century Travel Narratives"

MARGARETA INGRID CHRISTIAN. "Aer, Aurae, Venti: Philology and Physiology in Aby Warburg's Dissertation on Botticelli"

BEN GLASER. "Folk Iambics: Prosody, Vestiges, and Sterling Brown's *Outline for the Study of the Poetry of American Negroes*"

#### *Theories and Methodologies*

*Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition Studies*: essays by Janet Atwill, Patricia Bizzell, Jean Ferguson Carr, LuMing Mao, Paul Kei Matsuda, Shannon Walters, and Vershawn Young

*Commentaries on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*: essays by Ben Conisbee Baer, Mieke Bal, Simon During, Jean Franco, Forest Pyle, and Jenny Sharpe. Response by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

#### *Criticism in Translation*

Mikhail Bakhtin. "Bakhtin on Shakespeare." Translation and introduction by Sergei Sandler

Cover: Wangechi Mutu, large detail of *Le Noble Savage*, 2006. Ink and collage on Mylar, 91¼ × 54 in. Copyright Wangechi Mutu. Courtesy of the artist; Susanne Vielmetter, Los Angeles; and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

## Forthcoming in *PMLA*

### IN OTHER ISSUES

- LINDA GREGERSON. "Milton and the Tragedy of Nations"
- DONALD HEDRICK. "Distracting Othello: Tragedy and the Rise of Magic"
- MARIUS HENTEA. "Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris"
- DAVID KORNHABER. "Kushner at Colonus: Tragedy, Politics, and Citizenship"
- JOSHUA KOTIN. "Wallace Stevens's Point of View"
- LITAL LEVY AND ALLISON SCHACHTER. "Jewish Literature / World Literature: Between the Local and the Transnational"
- ANCA PARVULESCU. "Kafka's Laughter: On Joy and the Kafkaesque"
- SARAH VAN DER LAAN. "Songs of Experience: Confessions, Penitence, and the Value of Error in Tasso and Spenser"
- JULIANNE WERLIN. "Francis Bacon and the Art of Misinterpretation"

## Criticism in Translation

MLA members are invited to submit to the *PMLA* Editorial Board proposals for translations. Articles, as well as chapters or sections of books that can function as independent units, will be considered. The originals may be in any language. Two types of proposals are welcome: (1) significant scholarship from earlier periods that has not lost its forcefulness and whose retrieval in English in *PMLA* would be a noteworthy event for a broad body of readers and (2) contemporary work of sufficient weight and potential influence to merit the attention of the field as a whole.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should first ascertain that no previous English translation exists. The proposer should then provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the original essay, (2) an extended summary of the entire essay in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the essay if the essay is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the translation is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the proposer wishes to serve as translator of the essay or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), a 1,000-word sample of the translation should be submitted; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator.

The translated essays should normally not exceed *PMLA*'s 9,000-word limit. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals, evaluate the quality of the translations, and cooperate with the proposers and translators.

## Little-Known Documents

MLA members are invited to submit to the *PMLA* Editorial Board proposals regarding little-known documentary material that merits the attention of a broad range of readers. Consideration will be given to archival data from any period and in any language that do not exceed *PMLA*'s 9,000-word limit.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the document, (2) an extended summary of the document in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the document if it is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the document is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the document is not in English and if the proposer wishes to serve as translator or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), the proposal should include a 1,000-word sample of the translation; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator of accepted non-English material. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals.

### Correction

In S. Pearl Brilmyer's "The Natural History of My Inward Self: Sensing Character in George Eliot's *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*" (129.1 [2014]: 35–51), the term *scala natura* should be spelled *scala naturae* (39, 45, 46).

## Solicited Contributions

The editor and the Editorial Board periodically invite studies and commentaries by specific authors on topics of wide interest. These contributions appear in the following series: Theories and Methodologies, The Changing Profession, The Book Market, The Journal World, Letters from Librarians, and Correspondents at Large. MLA members are welcome to suggest topics that might be addressed under these rubrics.



## Guest Column

## What Is True in Our World? A Revival

IMANI PERRY

IN THE CENTER OF THE PRE-K CLASSROOM AT THE URBAN DAY Elementary School an easel stood. On the easel a translation poster rested. Above blue lines, the uppercase letters, in manuscript and in cursive, and then the lowercase ones—all through the alphabet.

I loved this poster. It was like a magic key. I studied it from every angle and copied it repeatedly. It was precious. It put the power of deciphering in my own small and otherwise unimpressive hands.

Learning to read and write is, when solitude and care are afforded, a passionate affair. It is an intimate act of discovery and imagination. Knowledge and creation are intertwined, coming as close to magic as our skepticism allows in our daily lives. We remember the books that captured our hearts (for me, Richard Scarry's encyclopedic forays into Busytown, Tom and Muriel Feelings's charcoal-shaded *Jambo Means Hello* [figs. 1 and 2]). And recall the frustration we felt when we realized that writing our own stories was arduous work, our young hand muscles too weak to keep up with our flights of fancy.

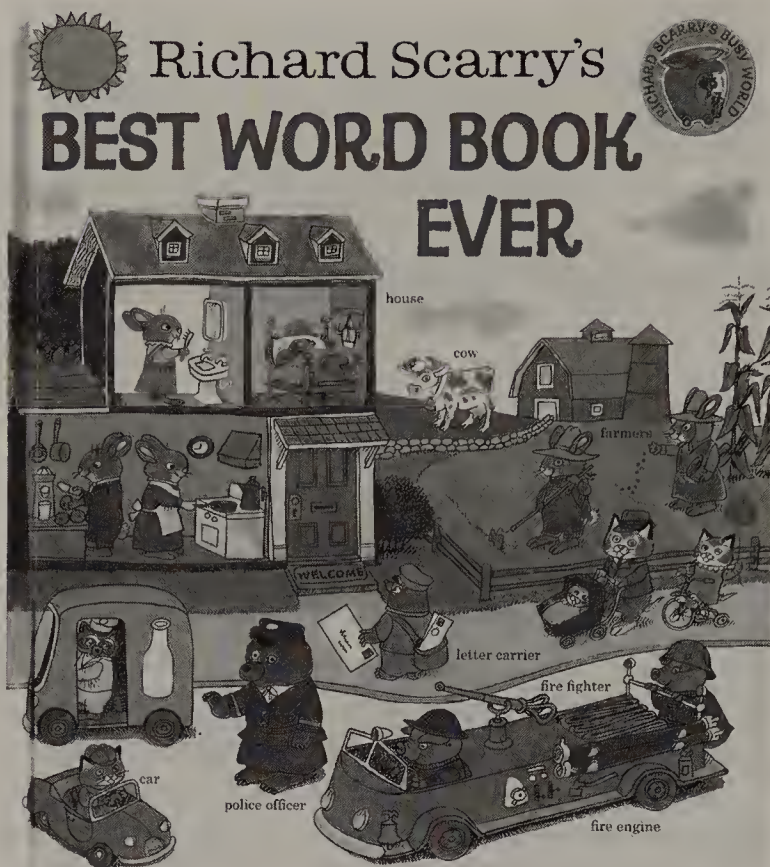
Literacy is an essential discipline. And yet over the past several decades we have been cyclically confronted with the idea that the humanities are in decline. That formulation is an ambiguous one. In some quarters it refers to college majors and where students believe their fortunes lie. In others it speaks to the rise of digital technology and to the diminishing value of artifacts of the analog world. Like books. And it appears as well among some of us who have devoted our lives to language and literature as we share declension stories about how people, particularly students, plagiarize without compunction and no longer read.

It is true that computer code matters. Formulas do too. But it is ridiculous to say that words do not. To defend literature and languages at present is a red herring. They do not need defense. They need revivals.

IMANI PERRY, a professor in the Center for African American Studies at Princeton University, is the author of *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (New York UP, 2011) and *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Duke UP, 2004).

FIG. 1

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We use potent metaphors, analogies, and synecdoches to categorize human beings. Figurative language allows us to distinguish (for better or worse) between the deserving and the undeserving. The politician we choose and

the one we despise are separated by words. The fear we live with and the one we ward off—words. With words we build arguments about which beings garner which rights and who ought to have status to do what. We sort, ruthlessly. But once in a while our sorting may be powerfully disrupted by a story that sticks in our craw. We can be transformed. We are intimidated by words that seem beyond us. We are grateful for those who translate a science we haven't studied into general understanding with simple metaphors and images. And we feel more sure or unsure about happenings around us, in the skies, and under our flesh because of it. Prose and poetry melt us, lift us, make real for us what has been created.

And when we are courageous scribes we illuminate, instruct, and even influence something through words. Everyone needs them.

Perhaps the trouble is that we too often present the academic discipline detached

from its essence. A close reading is an exercise, of course. But it is also at best a lifelong practice to facilitate discernment. Reading themes and tropes on the page and in life helps us understand how the world around us is organized. Traveling into the interior of a writer's imagination and of a character's life takes us beyond the limitations of our quotidian physical existence. All this is rather obvious, I guess. But it's worth

## jambo means hello

### SWAHILI ALPHABET BOOK

by Muriel Feelings · pictures by Tom Feelings

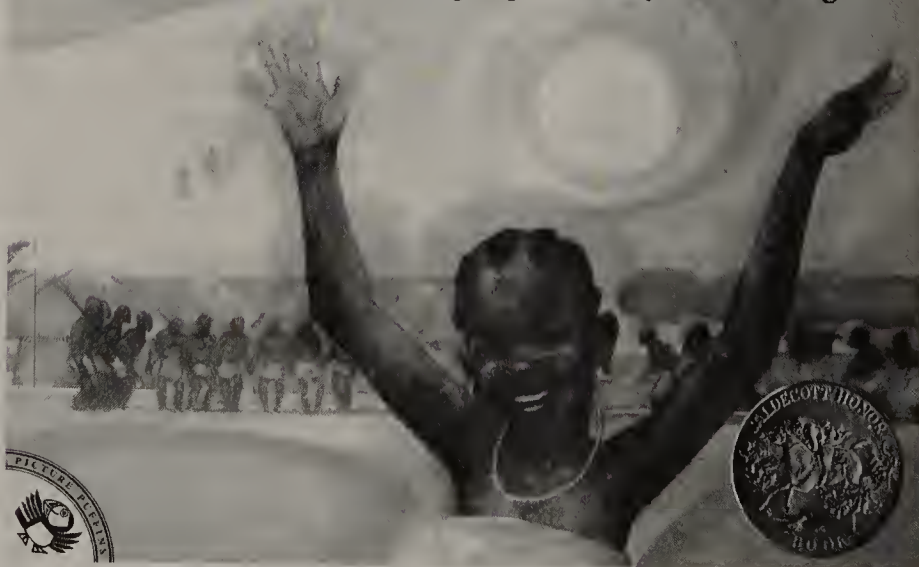


FIG. 2

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the reminder. After all, environmental disasters still take place and seem to be growing in frequency. War and genocide still ravage. Millions languish in prisons, other sites of detention, and extreme poverty. Broken hearts eat away at the will to endure. There's a great deal of suffering. And people have never generated political will or an ethical response to any sort of tragedy without the creative use of language and literature.

The study of language and literature is also important on its own terms. Each of us retains that private space where we first learned to decipher and scribe. The pleasure it brings, the sense of power it generates, is fundamentally human. And as scholars and students devoted to this practice, we are obliged to reveal its essences:

It is a place of discovery and creation.

We commune with the dead and with the as yet unborn on pages.

It is the terrain on which we make sense of and shape the world in which we live.

It is the sphere for transcending the self and binding ourselves to recognizing another.

It is where societies, laws, exclusions, and citizenship are all created.

None of this ought to be taken for granted.

The mystery of deciphering gives way to robust potential. You know the feeling of reading a dense piece of criticism or an essay in a language you are just beginning to learn. You struggle and struggle with it, and at some point it opens up into a clearing. All of a sudden not only do you understand what it says, but it becomes part of your living tool kit. You can use it freely to build your own ideas. Our work is to foster that growth in our students, our readers, and ourselves.

Twenty-five years ago the canon wars raged. Who could have imagined that the landscape for selecting texts would be so different now? The strangeness of the digital age is that we live at once with the sense that in-

finiteness is at our fingertips and the truth that the archive is incomplete. Excess and obfuscation coexist. And so we are called away from the question of canon to the responsibility of curating. Why do we select X? How did we wade through the ocean of books to come upon Y? What insights and models do we hope they grant us? The answers to these questions have both intellectual and ethical implications. Discernment in this instance is not performing good taste or providing students upper-crust "exposure." It is the deliberate practice of teaching and learning through form, substance, and interrogation.

The politics that once raged in debates about literature and languages have both changed and not changed. We have our positions. We are encouraged to hold tight. Neoliberalism makes perspectives commodities. Ideas are on the trading floor. But we try to carry them back to our studies for deeper reflection. They are often challenging. One well-regarded legal scholar asserts, There are more black American men in prison, in jail, or on probation today than there were enslaved in 1850. An ascendant social science scholar argues, It is a pernicious fiction that there are more black men in prison than in college. How do these observations sit next to each other? Both of them speak truthfully about what data show. What each does with data, however, is quite different. One wants to create a sense of urgency about mass incarceration. The other warns against racial-deficit approaches to the study of inequality in the United States. Both are committed to revealing and addressing racial injustice. As critical readers, however, we have to go beyond agreeing or disagreeing with their perspectives. We are called to read the gaps between data and exposition. We are compelled to think about the many potential ways of naming what raw numbers say. And to make plain the stakes involved in one approach or another.

I disagree when someone states flip-pantly, You can make statistics say anything

you want them to. No. Counting is objective. But it is true that the language (and the silences) surrounding statistics always merits interrogation. Language is slippery. And who better to interpret it than those trained in the art of close reading? Stripped of disciplinary pieties and party lines, new work is thrust upon the readers and writers of academe.

Yet sometimes the profession gets the best of us. We witness the contraction of the profession, the demise of job security, the market evaluation of a field we think ought to be valued for the way it feeds the soul, not for its ability to lead to economic recompense. We worry that it is all ending when we see brilliant recent PhDs floundering in a viciously competitive market and longstanding PhDs scraping by on food stamps. Rage, frustration, and grief about austerity are in our profession along with every other sector. When I say that the profession gets the best of us, then, I do not mean that we can escape these concerns. I mean that in the midst of the difficulty we have to remember that these social realities are the stuff of what we do. We are called in this moment to read, decipher, and scribe our way through this global crisis. To tell it all, moaning like sinners on revival day; to document, narrate, and argue. Essays, poems, novels, lectures, lessons, close readings, theory, criticism—playing our blues. The work is more important than ever.

Today in my mind sits an easel. And on it is the conversion of Pilate Dead in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. Pilate, an outcast among the cast out, is a truth teller. I study

her from every angle. I am emboldened by her witness:

Although she was hampered by huge ignorances, but not in any way unintelligent, when she realized what her situation in the world was and would probably always be she threw away every assumption she had learned and began at zero. First off, she cut her hair. That was one thing she didn't want to have to think about anymore. Then she tackled the problem of trying to decide how she wanted to live and what was valuable to her. When am I happy and when am I sad and what is the difference? What do I need to know to stay alive? What is true in the world? Her mind traveled crooked streets and aimless goat paths, arriving sometimes at profundity, other times at the revelations of a three-year-old. Throughout this fresh, if common, pursuit of knowledge, one conviction crowned her efforts: since death held no terrors for her (she spoke often to the dead), she knew there was nothing to fear. (149)

Literature is like a magic key. It is a reckoning and a beckoning. It is world remaking. Turn the key without hesitation.

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# Arresting Monstrosity: Polio, *Frankenstein*, and the Horror Film

DWIGHT CODR

*He was paralyzed with fright!*

—Dr. Phipps in *Night Monster* (1942)

*It wasn't my imagination. It was a giant, and when I got up he had ahold of my arm.*

—Peter von Frankenstein in *The Son of Frankenstein* (1939)

*Old broken bodies made new!*

—Frederick Bradman, on therapy for poliomyelitis (1933)<sup>1</sup>

EVER SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF CHRIS BALDICK'S METACRITICAL approach to the history of *Frankenstein*, in 1987, scholars have focused on the ways in which Mary Shelley's 1818 novel has been deployed, often to "articulate cultural hysteria" (O'Flinn 208). I wish to argue that given the context of epidemic poliomyelitis, mid-twentieth-century cinematic re-mediations of Shelley's monster were uniquely important in articulating mass fears, perhaps more so than its original depiction (which, for reasons I will discuss, would have been an inappropriate reference point for polio culture). In exploring the ways in which polio is encoded in cinema, I aim to show how the *Frankenstein* franchise and other horror films of the polio era worked in the service of public health initiatives and that if, as critics sometimes suggest, the first golden age of horror began with James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931), it was because it provided a cinematic grammar exceptionally appropriate to the age of polio.

This is largely unexplored territory.<sup>2</sup> As Marc Shell puts the problem, "Recent books about disability and the cinema suffer from a failure to consider the simultaneous advent of popular cinema

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(with its focus on kinesis) on the one hand and the epidemic of polio (with its forced stasis) on the other" (134–35). Part of the reason for this, Shell argues, is that Hollywood acknowledged polio's importance but went to great lengths to avoid its explicit presentation, as his adroit reading of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* illustrates. Polio, therefore, often appeared to audiences as a coded and oblique network of references and allusions rather than as the overt subject matter of cinema. Adding to Shell's analysis a consideration of horror films from the same period suggests a further dimension to polio culture: in horror, films traded less on stories of struggle and sought instead to exploit and reproduce the "spine-chilling" fears activated by the threat of disease. This essay shares Shell's interest in a culture that was terrified of poliomyelitis—a term coined to describe swelling of the gray matter of the spinal cord. The same culture was also increasingly consuming terrifying films routinely described, as Whale's *Frankenstein* was, as capable of sending "cold chills up and down the good old spinal cord" (Williams). In horror films, paralytic, deformed, and otherwise "abnormal" bodies do not typically represent the individual in a state of transition to "normalcy" but instead depend on and revel in the vast difference between the normal and the abnormal.

To underscore the impact of the convergence of cinema and polio on Shelley's monster, the first section of this essay briefly surveys its embodiment before Boris Karloff; the second section demonstrates the coded—at times, barely so—presence of polio in the golden age of horror; in this light, the third section analyzes relevant moments and motifs in the *Frankenstein* film series. The last section evaluates a 1947 film produced by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis in relation to the horror films previously discussed and closes with a consideration of the social implications of "the Karloffian monster." This phrase here describes not only

Karloff's screen performances but also later cinematic horrors that drew on the aspects of Karloff's monster—his body, gait, experiences, associates, and habitations—that coincided with and helped to define polio culture. I aim to isolate and study a strand of cultural hysteria as it manifested itself in the genre of the horror film; my goal is to show the symptoms and results of this cross-contamination between the spheres of cinema and public health, specifically the impact of polio culture on the horror film and the role of the horror film in the fight against polio.

### Monstrous Bodies before Karloff

So ingrained in our cultural consciousness is Karloff's monster that it is easy to forget how substantially it deviates from the monster described in Shelley's novel and portrayed in early theatrical and cinematic productions. Shelley's monster, for instance, suits the hostile physical expanses to which he is paradoxically confined: "I [Victor] suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution." Espying the monster outside Geneva, Victor remarks, "I thought of pursuing the devil, but it would have been in vain, for another flash discovered him to me hanging among the rocks of the nearly perpendicular ascent of Mont Salève. . . . He soon reached the summit and disappeared." Victor further wonders, "Who could arrest a creature capable of scaling the overhanging side of Mont Salève?" After Victor's deposition, the magistrate replies, "I would willingly afford you every aid in your pursuit, but the creature of whom you speak appears to have powers which would put all my exertions to defiance. Who can follow an animal which can traverse the sea of ice and inhabit caves and dens, where no man would venture to intrude?" Elsewhere Victor observes that he "saw him descend the



mountain with greater speed than the flight of an eagle” and move “with more than mortal speed” (65, 48, 49, 139, 100, 141). Combining these testaments to the monster’s abilities with the reminders of his hideousness—too numerous and obvious to require listing—reveals an author and era comfortable pairing ostracizing physical deformity with superior physical competency.

Nineteenth-century graphic artists emphasized this competency, not his ugliness or unholy creation. The monster appearing on the cover of Richard Brinsley Peake’s adaptation as it was printed in Dicks’ Standard Plays is European in appearance and handsome as well (fig. 1). Lithe and flexible, reclining with the confidence of an unthreatened man, he towers over the diminutive Victor, whose off-balance pose and slender, downwardly pointed sword symbolizes his physical impotency. For contrast, a strategically drawn baluster, intimating the monster’s colossal genitalia, registers his manliness and impossible virility. The monster’s handsomeness in this and other images suggests that his monstrosity consists in something other than ugliness, that ugliness is an accident whose removal does not compromise the character’s fundamental monstrosity.<sup>3</sup> The monster’s monstrosity is not necessarily his ugliness, at least not in the nineteenth century or at least not for everyone.

The earliest cinematic incarnations of the monster explore ugliness but do not abandon the physicality of the theatrical adaptations. In J. Searle Dawley’s *Frankenstein* (1910), Charles Ogle’s sinister and bestial monster moves fluidly, his gestures confident and organic. In *Life without Soul* (1915), Percy Standing’s monster involved “none of the grotesque trappings of Charles Ogle” and “wore no distin-

guishing make-up” (Glut 63). Though these early films deviate from Shelley’s novel in obvious ways, their monsters continue the tradition of presenting the creature as virile, lithe, strong, agile, and even, at times, handsome.<sup>4</sup> These early bodies are manifestly capable of the physical feats described by Shelley, and they evidence a general consistency with the monster’s physical potentiality. So how do we go from a character capable of descending mountains with eagle-like speed, of bounding across seas of ice, to the more limited Karloffian monster?

### The Karloffian Monster in Context

A widely recognized source for Karloff’s performance was Paul Wegener’s unsteady and stiff *Golem* (1920 [*Der Golem*]). This, however, does not explain why audiences, actors, and filmmakers kept evoking his Golemesque attributes in the ensuing decades. Establishing the polio context helps to do so. Karloff’s

FIG. 1

Frontispiece of Richard Brinsley Peake’s *Frankenstein*. Courtesy of Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, IUPUI University Library.





monster appeared in the years between the first two major polio outbreaks and attained iconic status in the next two decades, as the polio fear approached its climax. A complex and multiform disease, polio causes, among other symptoms, muscle tightening, stiffness of the legs or arms or both, slackening of facial muscles, labored or abnormal respiration, and slow, unsteady movement, all of which feature in the performances of Karloff and his successors. The kinetic similarities have been noted by polio survivors but not by historians of polio or by readers of Whale's film. Charles Mee writes of a childhood experience when his doctor and "three of her strong-armed assistants sat me up on a cot and swung my steel-clad leg over the side. Like Frankenstein. . . . Then they tilted me forward and lifted me up at the waist on my left side only so that the foot came off the floor, and my steel leg swung forward absurdly" (qtd. in Wilson, "And They" 184). Similarly, Michael Perrault writes of his childhood, "Eventually, I did [walk again]. But it wasn't without cold hard metal inserts under my arches in ankle-height orthopedic shoes attached to heavy chrome braces that clunked and gave me Frankenstein-like movements." Whereas braces and orthopedic shoes had helped Perrault and others walk, Jack Pierce, the makeup artist for Whale's film, "gave Karloff a five-pound brace to wear on his spine to keep his movements impaired and stiff, and a pair of raised boots that further hampered his walking, weighing an uncomfortable twelve and one-half pounds each" (Glut 103). Under such conditions, "any conception of the Monster as fleet . . . disappeared" (Lavalley 263). Whether the underlying body needed support or impediment, the impact of these technologies on viewers—of the cinematic monster or the polio victim—was the same. Seeing Karloff in Whale's film was to see a version of polio; for survivors, experiencing polio therapy was to experience being Karloff.

But limiting our attention to Karloff's 1931 performance would be a mistake, for

later screen monsters—within and without the Frankenstein canon—made his canonical through repetition, allusion, and citation. In other words, Karloff was undoubtedly influential, but his performance was made meaningful by later screen monsters, portrayed by an array of actors who grafted parts of his monster onto their own. So by "the Karloffian monster" I mean a set of performances that were as responsible for Karloff's iconicity as Karloff was for the performances. Hence, analyzing his 1931 monster requires us to consider as well Karloff's traces in monsters of the later 1930s and the 1940s, which legitimated his original performance. Much is to be gleaned from an evaluation of *Frankenstein's* precursors—including *Der Golem* and F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), where vampirism translates as plague—but because what is at stake here is Karloff's canonization in and his long reach into the golden age of horror, I focus on later films.

The Karloffian monster emerged, then, out of a series of films from Universal Studios that began with Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein*; Karloff reprised the role for *The Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939). Lon Chaney, Jr., presented the same basic figure in *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942); Bela Lugosi, having acted the part of Ygor for *Son*, played the monster in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943). Glenn Strange exploited the comic potential of an awkwardly mobile monster for *Bud Abbott and Lou Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), but Strange had appeared as the monster in two "serious" films before this: *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945). Lugosi's and Chaney's monsters were exaggerations of Karloff's, Strange's the most hyperbolic. In 1957, when Hammer Film Productions took over the franchise, Christopher Lee's monster, in *The Curse of Frankenstein*, bore no resemblance to Karloff's: gone were the electrodes, the stiffness, the unbalanced stride. Lee's break with the tradition was



nowhere more apparent than in the scene where audiences first saw his visage. Where in close-up the camera had lingered on Karloff's slackened face and sunken eyes, Lee violently dashes away his bandages. Why Hammer went in a new direction is less important than the fact that Karloff's monster, not Lee's, persists in our cultural memory.<sup>5</sup> Polio provided an organizing frame of reference for consumption of the Karloffian monster, and while the end of the polio scare in 1955—the year of Jonas Salk's polio vaccine—corresponds to the end of the Karloffian monster on-screen, its endurance as icon bespeaks the presence of an unresolved cultural remainder, a point to which I will return at the end of this essay.

Beginning in 1916, polio inserted itself into the American imaginary, for two reasons.<sup>6</sup> First, many people were infected or personally knew someone that had been infected by it. Because of reporting discrepancies, mortality and infection statistics vary, but, to provide some perspective, there were 27,000 cases and 6,000 deaths the year of the first polio outbreak (1916). That year 9,000 New Yorkers alone contracted polio. Infections rose and fell over the years. In 1952, a particularly bad year, there were 58,000 cases. Second, the public campaign against polio made it a matter of concern for all citizens, regardless of actual infection. Less than a week after the New York epidemic of 1916 was publicly announced and acknowledged, children, infected or not, were officially barred from entering movie houses (Gould 5), which was part of a larger process of turning a medical matter into one of public policy. Officials stressed hygiene and discouraged attendance at public places of resort, especially swimming pools; doctors became celebrities; March of Dimes' logos appeared in advertisements for films, clothing, financial services, and other products. If one did not suffer from polio, one was enlisted in the fight against it.<sup>7</sup> The president of the United States for much of this era had polio, and, notwithstanding some attempt at

concealment, polio made its way into public consciousness through his presence in newspapers, broadcasts, and conversation.

If we intend to read Karloff in a polio context, what accounts for the fifteen-year gap separating the first epidemic, in 1916, from the distribution of Whale's 1931 film? Neither imagery of children suffering from polio nor the technology to circulate it was available until somewhat later. The first publicized acknowledgment of the disease as an American problem did not take place until 1926–27, when FDR established the whites-only Warm Springs Foundation. The invention of the iron lung (1927) further enhanced polio's profile; it assisted sufferers with breathing and saved many lives, but in immobilizing the body and looking rather like a coffin, it “became the most terrifying symbol of polio's destructive power” (Oshinsky, following 150). The National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFIP), designed to heighten awareness and sponsor research, was not founded until 1937 and only came into its own the following year when Eddie Cantor publicly styled its fundraising arm as “the March of Dimes” (MOD). As a result, the images of polio multiplied rapidly in the late 1920s, were increasingly distributed in the 1930s, around the time of the first *Frankenstein* films, and were universal by the 1940s. In 1941 the Tuskegee Infantile Paralysis Center (TIPC), for African American victims, supplemented the Warm Springs Foundation, NFIP, and MOD; its establishment was “marked by a ceremony broadcast nationally on the radio,” featuring an address by FDR (Rogers 784). Although TIPC was an outgrowth of Jim Crow, the center's institutional ties to NFIP began the work of communicating that polio was an equal-opportunity disease and that the effort to combat it therefore had to include all racial identities.

The outing of polio was further delayed by the fact that sufferers had been and would continue to be kept out of sight by their families because of stigma. The antipolio

campaigns only gradually brought into the public eye what had been kept as family secrets (Wilson, "Crippling Fear" 486–87 and "And They" 176–77).<sup>8</sup> The publicity campaign gained momentum when, in 1934, three years after Whale's first film, another major outbreak of polio occurred, this time in Los Angeles, where *Frankenstein* had been filmed and where its sequel, *Bride*, was being filmed. Reports of "50 new cases a day" induced panic (Paul 221). Perhaps because the outbreak occurred in a city tied to film production, that industry took a keen interest in the polio problem. In the early 1940s the largest source of donations to MOD was the collection boxes circulated in movie theaters: "In 1938 annual contributions to the March of Dimes amounted to \$1.8 million. By 1945 that figure had reached \$19 million, the most ever raised by a charity other than the American Red Cross. Forty percent—almost \$8 million—came from local movie houses" (Shell 69). For reasons aside from their professional ties with New York and Los Angeles, theater owners were surely aware, while closures and attendance restrictions continued, that their venues needed to be seen as part of the solution rather than a source of the problem.<sup>9</sup> Just as TIPC had implicitly increased polio's relevance to racial minorities, the theaters' practices incorporated an erstwhile private concern into an expanding public network of information and research.

What did Hollywood have to offer in its films? In *The Healer* (1935), a Warm Springs doctor treats the polio-stricken Jimmy while trying to sort out his own love life during a vacation. *Never Fear* (1949) tells the story of a dancer tragically stricken by polio and her fight against it. A few films had minor characters suffering from polio or subplots pertaining to it—*Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), *Roughly Speaking* (1945)—but even as newspaper readers during this period "may have felt as if there was nowhere to run from the endless train of bad news related to polio"

(Foertsch 153), what surprises is how few films directly confronted the epidemic.<sup>10</sup> In those that did, polio often serves as a convenient backdrop for the unfolding of a human drama and has little to do with the historical realities of the disease. *The Healer*, perhaps the most sustained cinematic treatment of polio before Salk's vaccine, simply translated the terms of a 1911 novel about cancer (Herrick). As Shell observes, "a movie or stage play that says it is about polio may not be essentially about polio" (151).

While only a handful of films explicitly confront polio, allusions to it abound in the horror genre. What appears to mark the territory of the horrific in cinema of this period is the frequent citation of polio in forms other than itself: blood, body parts, injections, serums, experiments on simians, laboratories, prosthetics, restraints, therapy, and doctors.<sup>11</sup> Establishing this context for the rise of the horror genre makes it easier to appreciate and understand the fears and anxieties that attended the viewing of many films of the period. To list a few before moving on to a more sustained consideration of others: *The Black Room* (1935) features Boris Karloff as Anton, whose paralyzed arm plays a key role in the plot; in *The Man Who Lived Again* (1936), Dr. Laurence (Karloff) undertakes his diabolical plan with a surgical assistant who requires a wheelchair; the plot of *The Return of Dr. X* (1939) concerns the use of synthetic blood in reanimating the dead. Full of details concerning doctors who seek cures, inject patients with mysterious serums, experiment with animal parts, and immobilize bodies by strapping them down to gurneys or into machines in confusing laboratory spaces, these films recall stories about vaccination programs in the 1930s, about the arrival of Elizabeth Kenny and her unauthorized therapies focusing on "reintroducing" stiffened limbs to the brain, and about research into and development of respiration devices, braces, restraints, and dietary and hygiene regimens



recommended by research centers from Minnesota to Georgia, Tuskegee to New York. Thematically speaking, horror's interest in reanimation also echoed the increasingly unstable boundary between life and death exemplified by the liminality of life in a coffin-like iron lung, as well as the somewhat confusing notion of "live" but "attenuated" vaccines.

During this time, Karloff routinely played the role of patient or doctor wrestling with issues of life, death, body parts, disease, and cure. In *The Man They Could Not Hang* (1939), he plays both. In *Before I Hang* (1940), he is a doctor researching a cure for aging; in *Black Friday* (1940), he reanimates his dead friend by using the brain of a deceased gangster; in *The Devil Commands* (1941), Dr. Blair (Karloff) attempts to make contact with his dead wife. Even when he was not cast, Karloff's presence could be felt in films dealing with such themes. In *The Monster Maker* (1944), the villain, played by J. Carrol Naish, bears a name, Dr. Igor Markoff, that could not more obviously evoke Ygor of the *Frankenstein* franchise and Karloff. While attempting to find a cure for the disease that killed his wife, Markoff cultivates a live form of the disease from "a concentrate of pituitary [gland]," which, when injected into the patient, impairs movement by producing severe physical deformity. This story capitalized on widely publicized experimentation with simian tissue in polio research; scolding his assistant for requesting the removal of a gorilla that is caged in his office, he remarks that the ape is "essential to my work."<sup>12</sup> As Markoff's diabolical plan unfolds, his increasingly deformed victim, the pianist Anthony Lawrence, chastises him: "Markoff! You have set yourself up as a Frankenstein and created a monster! I am that monster; but, if you remember, the monster destroyed the man who created him! That is what I'm going to do to you, Markoff!" At such a moment, in the mid-1940s, Karloff is Markoff, Markoff is Frankenstein, Lawrence is the monster, the monster is Karloffian; the

film is thickly huddled and unstably allied with *Frankenstein* in an atmosphere of polio, disability, and experiment.

It is customary to see the mad doctor as interchangeable with the mad scientist, no doubt in part because Karloff was cast in both roles, but this fails to appreciate an important dimension of horror in the golden age, when polio presented true horror stories in the form of the widely publicized 1935 inoculation catastrophes associated with the researchers Maurice Brodie and John Kolmer. Much of the horror of these films consists in the threat that doctors might *become* scientists. Most of the films listed above feature villains who experience some kind of personal trauma and, in attempting to cure, become killers. Although Dr. Frankenstein and other madmen of horror are "scientists," the polio epidemic provided a medical frame of reference for their science. For instance, in *Night Monster* (1942) three doctors visit the estate of a wealthy former patient of theirs, Curt Ingston, who is now a quadriplegic; in a series of dialogues, each doctor reveals his careerist motivations and mercenary interests, indicating an unethical blurring of care and research. As the doctors are murdered in succession, everyone suspects the wheelchair-bound Ingston, believing that he may be faking paralysis. This suspicion subsides when it is discovered that he is a quadruple amputee. But the plot turns again, and Ingston is revealed to be the killer: we learn that he has acquired the ability to psychokinetically materialize arms and legs to carry out his revenge on the doctors who treated him as a research project. Audiences are not told what this research was exactly, but they would not have had to reach far to infer that the doctors were treating arms and legs rendered inoperative by polio to advance their own selfish, shadowy agendas. Although Ingston's paralysis is not explicitly ascribed to polio, one should consider Shell's insight regarding the constitutive ambiguities of polio

culture: "How could one tell for sure what was the cause of a person's being in a wheelchair? . . . Captain Ahab . . . in *The Sea Beast* (1926) has lost his lower leg, so we might figure that his situation is that of an amputee. But what if he is tricking us? Or what if amputation were a treatment for polio? How would we know for sure?" (150–51). Ingston represents the polio victim not because he is so described but because the audience is forced to ask, What if he is tricking us? The film takes us to the heart of polio culture not because it places a quadruple amputee at the center of its narrative but precisely because it refuses its audience an explanation for this central fact of the narrative.

To audiences in the theaters Shell discusses, who had likely just been asked to donate to MOD, Ingston's psychokinetically generated legs and arms would have been richly meaningful. They may have provided wish fulfillment for some victims, a psychocinematic kinesis that fantastically solved what Shell describes as the "forced stasis" of polio, but they also reminded audiences that a scientific solution to paralysis was, in 1942, as tragically unlikely as a psychokinetic one. In addition, they recall the mysterious movement of polio from victim to victim. How could a disease that impeded its victims' mobility be so easily transmitted? Although this is not hard to grasp, since many polio victims retained or regained mobility and since bodily intimacy was not, in any case, necessary for transmission, such realities do little to ameliorate anxieties about disease (as similarly irrational anxieties about HIV transmission in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrate). Much of the highly publicized medical research leading up to the vaccine was concerned with questions of transmission: did the disease require physical contact? did it spread through the air? could it be spread through objects, such as pencils? was it transmitted along a nasal-oral or fecal-oral route? "Polio fears were exacerbated by the lack of

solid medical knowledge regarding the disease" (Wilson, "Crippling Fear" 469). A variation of the transmission question serves as *Night Monster's* central mystery: how can a man confined to a wheelchair hunt down his victims? Ingston's homicidal mobility serves as a trope for this line of inquiry, and, like the disease he figures, it was frightening to the extent that it was inexplicable. Psychokinesis enters the film's reality through the magical kinetics of film, suggesting that the palpable threat of immobility provides an exigency, authority, and market for films whose frights and mysteries derived from editing trickery.

*The Ape* (1940) weaves together aspects of *The Monster Maker* and *Night Monster*: Dr. Bernard Adrian (Karloff) attempts to cure the wheelchair-bound paraplegic Frances, the victim of a "paralysis epidemic" that recently hit the town (extras in the film use crutches). Adrian discovers that human spinal fluid cures paralysis; when an ape escapes from a local circus, he kills it, dresses himself in its skin, and goes out to collect fluid from members of the community until authorities shoot him dead. Mad as Adrian may have appeared, his motivation for killing was to cure Frances, and he did just that: the film closes with an image of her walking in the sunshine with her boyfriend. Nevertheless, the townspeople rightly feared Adrian, believing that he would treat them as "guinea pigs." The film refers only to a "paralysis epidemic," and although unmistakably dealing with polio—its symptoms, its victims, the race for a cure, medical technologies, simians, epidemic disease—the film never mentions it by name. But, again, few films in any genre did so. Here polio reveals itself only in the paralysis plot and the otherwise baffling ape appearance.

More broadly speaking, *The Ape*, *Night Monster*, and *The Monster Maker* all work to unsettle markers of difference. Playing on fears that doctors have ulterior scientific agendas, each film makes the doctor out to be criminally insane, displacing the more ra-



tional fear of what was happening with real-world doctors working on polio. Presenting their victims as male and female, criminal and official, young and old, rich and poor, collectively these films asked audiences to see past differences and to recognize a shared vulnerability vis-à-vis a complexly figured nemesis/disease (which are occasionally, as in *The Monster Maker*, the same thing). Many such films present carnally threatening simians that, on the one hand, exploit white audiences' racist fears of black male sexuality but, on the other, resolve the ape into a scientific prop, at least provisionally bracketing the issue of race by suggesting that apes are not always black men; sometimes they are research experiments.<sup>13</sup> These films show bad doctors and the disease as menaces to a citizenry defined by its common need for a cure.

### The Karloffian Monster

Important as the kinesiological similarities of the Karloffian monster and the polio sufferer are to this reading, the intersections of polio culture and *Frankenstein* are not confined to the monster's walk, posture, and appearance.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the immobility that should have rendered the disease less contagious made it all the more terrifying, just as the monster's plodding deliberateness of movement instilled in audiences nervousness rather than a sense of security. Correspondingly, the physical limitations imposed by polio contributed to rather than detracted from the perceived and real lethality of contagion. Scenes in *Frankenstein* and its sequels wherein the slow-moving monster is suddenly at the point of attack dramatize the anxious anticipation of viewers regarding the nature of polio contraction. Viewers at the time did not establish this connection, but a reviewer of *Son of Frankenstein* seemed to sense that the monster's gait, somewhere between humorous and horrifying, had something to do with the film's effect on au-

diences: "Once more Karloff appears as The Monster, an amazing creature that stalks about in wooden soldier manner, and weeps because he isn't as handsome as Mr. Rathbone. The plot leads to shrieks and nervous paroxysms of laughter" ("New Films"). Shelley had paired the monster's brute strength with the locomotive swiftness of an athlete, thereby enabling the illustrator of Peake's adaptation to render the monster as an Achilles; Karloff paired brute strength with the locomotive impairment of disease, creating a being who was unconquerable and destructive but also "wooden," immobile.

Did Karloff merely bring a dose of realism to the performance, suggesting that such a monster would logically be a little unsteady at first? Certainly, another way of reading Karloff's character is to see in his awkward steps the instability and uncertainty of a child's first steps. As a newborn, the cinematic monster can be read as infantile and incipient rather than adult and "finished." Why, however, were audiences inclined to keep revisiting the spectacle of a giant walking like a child? Polio threatened to impose paralysis on the child, to turn an immobility natural to infancy (the inability to walk or to walk well) into a permanent and thus unnatural condition of life (limping, paralysis).<sup>15</sup> The monster therefore evokes complex fears associated with the idea of a mature mind with an infant's legs, an adult trapped in a child's body.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the Karloffian monster stoked fears about polio by embodying the polio victim as a sort of death-bringing man child, who, enabled by technology just enough to move about, is best kept at a distance.

The importance of children in the *Frankenstein* films is hard to overstate, for they feature prominently in *Frankenstein*, *Bride*, and the significantly titled *Son of Frankenstein*. The scene where the monster kills Maria in the first of these films piqued the ire of the Motion Picture Directors Association



FIG. 2

Frame from *Son of Frankenstein* (1939).

of America (MPDAA), leading to the scene's excision. The MPDAA's censure of the scene may have intensified the horror of what remained in the film, however. Now there was a gap between the monster's approach to the child and the bearing of her corpse through the street by her grieving father, a gap that audiences were made to fill in with speculative details of her demise.<sup>17</sup> While it was the philistinism of the MPDAA that had produced this vagary in the plot of *Frankenstein*, provocative indeterminacy is exploited in *Son of Frankenstein*. Repudiating Baron Wolf von Frankenstein's claims that townspeople must be overstating the monster's past villainies, Inspector Krogh informs Wolf that he himself lost his arm to the monster—we see that it has been replaced with a prosthesis—when he was a child.<sup>18</sup> Krogh's account of losing his arm is later echoed when Wolf's son Peter informs his father that he was awoken from his nap by a "giant" who grabbed hold of his arm (see the second epigraph). Krogh starts at this, grabs his prosthesis, and facially communicates the trauma of recollection as well as his determination to kill the monster. Wolf continues to interrogate Peter about this moment of contact, which occurred offscreen,

like the monster's encounters with Maria in *Frankenstein* and Frida in *Bride*. To help his father (and the audience) understand what happened, Peter says that he was visited by "a great big man, and he walked like this," giving an imitation indistinguishable from that of a child in leg braces using crutches (fig. 2). Peter's stiffened gait is supposed to be an imitation, but it encodes the contraction of polio (fig. 3). Maria and Frida die after a menacing and uncertain presence is allowed to invade a space that should be under parental supervision; the same convention is invoked but also transformed when

Peter is assaulted while napping in the comfort of his own, erstwhile safe home.

There are multiple overlaps between the films in the *Frankenstein* series and polio culture. *Son of Frankenstein* presents several in addition to that involving Peter. Wolf, for instance, subjects the monster to a barrage of medical tests to determine the nature of the affliction that has incapacitated him, and it turns out that the monster suffers from symptoms that characterize polio: high blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, enlarged heart. Listing the symptoms in the film at all anticipates the use of increasingly recondite medical language in horror films as audiences grew accustomed to such things as blood pressure and acromegaly and found them to be interesting narrative material. Wolf then puts the monster on a kind of respirator and gives him a chest X-ray (fig. 4). Just after this scene, in which the monster has been fully medicalized, his differently disabled kindred spirit Ygor, exiting a meeting with local officials, is upbraided for coughing all over them and throughout the room ("Hey! You spit on me!" complains one official). The officials here, representative of the public health establishment, come into threatening contact with



Ygor through effluvia that is implicitly tainted by its metonymic connection to the film's monster, Ygor's "friend." Further, when the inspector later asks the baron why he works in a dilapidated laboratory adjacent to the main house, given the potent fumes emanating from below, Wolf replies, "The structure was built by the Romans over a natural sulfur pit and was used by them as mineral baths," evoking the Warm Springs property to which FDR retreated for its therapeutic waters.

Though the question of the monster's relation to technology is significant to the novel and its many adaptations, it takes on unique relevance for the Karloffian monster. The introduction of electrodes on the monster's neck makes explicit a fusion of organic and inorganic material that no earlier performances and few post-Universal films emphasize.<sup>19</sup> The electrodes suggest the monster's machinic nature, illustrated through comparisons of the *Frankenstein* monster with other cinematic cyborgs and robots (see, e.g., Goldman 279–80). The electrodes became (and remain) synecdoches for the monster, much as braces would be for the polio victim. This is more than visionary reading; in explaining the reason for the electrodes in a 1939 interview, Jack Pierce, the makeup artist responsible for Karloff's stylization, revealed that "Karloff has not only spent 864 shooting hours in three pictures with those big bolts plugged into his neck but he carries a five-pound steel spine—that you can't see—to represent the rod which conveys the current up to the monster's brain" ("Oh, You"). The electrodes were imag-



FIG. 3

Frame from *In Daily Battle* (1947). Courtesy of the March of Dimes Archives, White Plains, New York.

ined as the visible sign of a metallic brace that constrained and defined Karloff's motions. Furthering this tendency to interweave flesh with metal, the films regularly feature the monster in a laboratory space, strapped to a chair (*Bride*) or to a table (*Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*), limbs restricted by bands (a routine treatment for polio sufferers), and surrounded by electronics. Perhaps

FIG. 4

Frame from *Son of Frankenstein*.





FIG. 5

Frame from *Son of Frankenstein*.

the most obvious nod to polio culture along these lines comes in a pair of scenes featuring the monster on a respirator. In *Son* the distraught Ygor looks on as the doctor tests the monster's breathing (fig. 5); in *House of Frankenstein* the monster breathes thanks to a respirator inside a pressurized, body-length chamber (fig. 6). The moment surely looks back to a similar scene in *Metropolis*, but it just as surely looks laterally, at terrifying and tragic images of bodies encased in iron lungs.

### The Karloffian Monster and the Crippler

Polio is an important context for understanding the *Frankenstein* film series—as well as horror films more generally during the period—not merely because the disease offered frightening images and themes that could be incorporated into films already deemed horrific but also because golden-age horror organizes itself according to the logic of a polio culture, one that gave it a ready and real set of terms, images, and fears to employ and exploit. But polio culture is not all that is at stake here; this final section looks at the impact that organizing public health initiatives around

the figure of the monster had on polio's victims. Representing disease as a kind of monster naturally led public health officials to the shadowy figures of horror film, but whereas the horror film could always cut ties with its coded significations and send its monsters to the grave with impunity, the polio-era public health film was forced to explicitly equate the monster with the “crippled” polio victim. One effect was to make the victims of the disease into monsters.

It is impossible to say with precision what is the nature of a culture's diffusive fears and how the overlaps described in the preceding sections affected ordinary

viewers in movie houses (though, as I have indicated, polio survivors have noticed similarities). However, the evidence plainly suggests exchanges between the two discursive, symbolic, and iconographic registers, and if NFIP was not exactly sponsoring new *Frankenstein* films, it was nevertheless looking to horror to help articulate its mission and mobilize supporters. In 1947 MOD, NFIP's fund-raising arm, released a promotional film officially entitled *In Daily Battle*; unofficially, the film took the name that polio had popularly assumed: *The Crippler*. It begins with a prelude spoken by the United States surgeon general, Thomas Parran, who observes that polio's “treacherous attacks” are adding more names each year to the list of its victims; Parran encourages the audience to watch “this motion picture” to understand polio and the campaign against it. The film proper then opens with an ominous musical note, a shot of an eerily illuminated sky, and a disembodied voice: “My name is Virus Poliomyelitis. I cause a disease which you call infantile paralysis.” Materializing in the clouds is an obscure shadow of a human-looking body bearing a crutch in its arm, emphasizing that



polio and the polio victim are the same menacing presence. The child on crutches is the victim *and* embodiment of the terrifying Virus Poliomyelitis. The voice continues: "I consider myself quite an artist, sort of a sculptor. I specialize in grotesques, twisting and deforming human bodies. That's why I'm called the Crippler. You've never seen me, but I'm sure you've seen my shadow." The film thus aligns the audience's fears of the disease with the people who have been broken by it, running the risk of turning the campaign against polio into a campaign against polio's victims.



FIG. 6

Frame from *House of Frankenstein* (1944).

As the shadow moves from sky to earth, the narrative takes shape. The camera settles on an adolescent country boy leading a horse through a farmyard; as he approaches a barn, the crutch-bearing shadow enters the screen from the right (fig. 7), growing larger as the voice continues: "I'm never invited, but I've been an invisible guest in practically every kind of home." By the time the sentence ends, the shadow has overtaken the boy, blotting him out as the boy increasingly shows signs of illness. "This is what I've been looking for!" enthusiastically reports the shadow. This scenario is repeated twice: next the shadow overtakes a natty college-age man, and finally it descends on a blond girl leaving her house for school (fig. 8). As the shadow moves from country to city, the voice of the Crippler resumes, his speech occasionally punctuated with melodramatically evil laughter: "It's easy to scare city folks, and I seem to get better results when people are afraid of me. I have many disguises that I use to fool people; you could call them symptoms. . . . As you probably know, I'm very

fond of children, especially little children." The camera sweeps past a group of African American children: "I have no prejudices; I'm quite impartial. . . . I feel very active today; I may even start an epidemic." The use of ominous shadow in horror films extends back to German expressionist cinema, but in its proximity to the child it visually echoes a scene in *The Ghost of Frankenstein* in which the monster looms above a sleeping girl (fig. 9).

FIG. 7

Frame from *In Daily Battle*. Courtesy of the March of Dimes Archives, White Plains, New York.





FIG. 8

Frame from *In Daily Battle*. Courtesy of the March of Dimes Archives, White Plains, New York.

Eventually, the film drops the Crippler conceit and explains how doctors relay messages to NFIP and how local agencies work in this coordinated effort to help families address their needs. A triumphal march commences after the recovery of the three victims—which is gradually revealed in a lengthy montage featuring doctors, nurses, public officials, switchboard operators, and the system of diagnosis, treatment, and care

FIG. 9

Frame from *The Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942).



that NFIP helped put into place. A different nondiegetic voice, sounding confident and optimistic, closes the film to images of happy children running: “And with your help, your National Foundation carries on its relentless crusade for the ultimate extinction of the shadow that creeps through the land, seeking whom it may destroy. Your continued support will hasten the day when all our children, *free of the Crippler’s terror*, may enjoy their heritage in happiness and health” (my emphasis). NFIP successfully reintegrates polio’s victims into family and society following their “cure” and

allows them to live out a harmonious, multicultural, distinctively American “heritage.” What was to be done about those who would not regain full mobility is a matter that lurks on the dark side of the film, in the space of a monster, one imported from a series of films that had made it possible for the menacing Virus Poliomyelitis to appear in an educational film as the “crippled” shadow body of the polio victim.

Just as horror had been trading on the terrifying imagery of polio for its effects, NFIP’s use of the Crippler figure suggests that cinematic terror was seen as useful in mobilizing the public. However, NFIP received multiple complaints that *In Daily Battle* was too “gruesome.” One viewer “remarked that the beginning of the film was more like a film intended for a spook show on Halloween night rather than one intended to educate the public about a disease” (Belknap). Responding to complaints about the film’s effect on young viewers, Hart Van Riper, director of NFIP’s medical department, apologeti-



cally wrote in an internal memo (Jan. 1948) that “[w]hen the script of this film was approved by the Medical Department . . . it was my distinct understanding that the purpose of the film was for stimulating Chapters to better organization and hence better service, and for stimulating interest on the part of organized groups in the community to become part [of MOD].” The film was apparently pulled shortly thereafter from the libraries of local MOD chapters. In concealing their indebtedness to polio culture, horror films flourished; public health officials, conversely, encountered problems incorporating horror’s conventions into their productions. Where filmgoers appeared to have been stimulated into buying ever more tickets for access to a steady stream of terrifying reminders of polio, NFIP discovered that it had material enough to work with already, that polio carried horror enough for audiences, and that it did not need to borrow that which it had already lent to Hollywood.

version that every subsequent retelling has had to confront in one way or another” (Worland 157).

6. For reasons of space, I must restrict my focus to the American experience of *Frankenstein* during 1916–55.

7. The history of polio recounted here comes from Oshinsky; Gould; Shell; and Paul.

8. Shell observes that the imperative to secrecy pervades accounts of polio written by survivors (esp. 52–53, 57–58, and 73–74).

9. Closures of places of public resort due to polio were common at this time. In Trenton, New Jersey, for instance, theaters, Sunday schools, stores, playgrounds, parks, and churches were closed, and “gatherings of any kind” were prohibited (“Trenton”).

10. Shell discusses additional polio films, including *Sister Kenny* (1946), but most films that explicitly address polio were released after Salk’s vaccine.

11. See Tudor. I follow Tudor in arguing that the genre of horror exists only in relation to the specific historical conditions of horror films’ release.

12. The film is not clear about certain details. Markoff injects his victims with acromegaly, which is a pituitary disorder, not a substance. Essentially, Markoff uses simian glandular tissue to formulate a cure for the deforming disease but weaponizes it in the process.

13. This raises significant questions about horror, primates, race, and disease research that I do not have space to explore here. In horror, apes are at once racialized identities and deracinated experimental matter.

14. Cox describes Karloff’s monster as characterized by a “gentle and tragic . . . awkwardness,” a phrase that captures the sentimental affect that scholars of polio associate with later attitudes toward those impaired by it (223).

15. Related to the monster’s posture is the cinematographer Arthur Edson’s German-expressionist-influenced framing of Karloff in ostentatiously geometrical structures, near intersecting support beams or, more famously, in a doorway, his hands lightly touching the door frame (for balance?). At once underscoring his physical instability (needing support) and metaphorizing his own inhuman geometricity, these shots align the monster with the unstable polio victim as well as with the mechanical apparatuses involving braces and crutches designed to produce provisional motional stability. For more on the debt to expressionism, see Cox, esp. 223–27.

16. Glut writes that for him, Karloff “was in effect just a newborn baby in a giant body” (xvii). Nestruck similarly senses that the inability to speak and walk has the effect of “mak[ing] an adult a monstrous child” (296) and that “[s]eeing this grotesque adult [the monster] without these skills is somehow a terrifying reminder that our adulthood depends on our acquiring them.” I share Nestruck’s sense of the childishness of the monster’s walk and would add that in the polio era adulthood was no guarantee of able-bodiedness.

## NOTES

I am deeply grateful to David Rose, at the March of Dimes Archives, for his assistance with the research for this paper and to Meghan Freeman, Gregory Colón Semenza, and Cathy Schlund-Vials for providing feedback on earlier drafts.

1. “By means of surgery . . . muscles can be transplanted and found of much more value in their new functions than they previously were. Old broken bodies made new!” (897).

2. Clark discusses other medical issues at stake in classic horror films.

3. Notwithstanding the frontispiece in Dicks’ *Standard Plays*, the monster was “hideous in aspect” and “tremendously appalling” in the performances of Peake’s adaptation, according to one account (“First Reviews”).

4. Summarizing Lavalley, Nestruck writes that “several stage versions [before Whale’s film] introduced speechlessness but kept the rapidity of movement attributed to him in the novel” (295).

5. Glut and others have detailed the material history of Hammer’s changes. All *Frankenstein* monsters must nevertheless engage with Karloff’s, “a definitive screen

17. Glut too finds the gap more terrifying than the elided scene, proposing that the audience's imaginative bridgework results in a "suspicion that she was raped by the Monster" (114).

18. Although the more popular image of the polio victim is one of a child with paralyzed legs, polio was responsible for paralysis of the arms as well.

19. An example of a post-Universal monster with this characteristic is the one portrayed by Nick Brimble in Roger Corman's *Frankenstein Unbound*.

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# Louise Glück's Twenty-First-Century Lyric

REENA SASTRI

IN A 2009 INTERVIEW WITH LOUISE GLÜCK, HER FELLOW POET DANA Levin observes, "I have a student right now who likes to talk about entry fees; you know, how much does it cost to enter this poem? And he recently said to me, 'The entry fee for a Louise Glück poem is, like, a dollar, but once you get in, the territory is complex'" ("For a Dollar"). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it can be difficult to recognize the complexity of a poem whose entry fee is low—whose metalinguistic and metafictional reflexivity emerges through spare, deceptively plain language and whose philosophical curiosity resides in the company of psychological insight and emotional immediacy. Contemporary poets keen to innovate in American poetics signal their ambitions, in the main, by opposing plain language, first-person speech, psychology, and emotion. At the same time, scholars working in a critical climate that favors thick description of literary works' cultural histories resolve to demystify the lyric poem as an illusion of unmediated, unsituated personal speech. Poetic practices that disrupt, interrupt, or refuse the fiction of voice and critical approaches that expose voice as a fiction can seem the only alternatives to indulging a naive belief in the author's speaking presence in the poem. Such a stark choice obscures the varied possibilities for contemporary poetic practice and makes rich and flexible theorizations of lyric the exception.<sup>1</sup>

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The poetry and poetics of Louise Glück speak compellingly to this impasse. A prizewinning former poet laureate of the United States whose *Poems 1962–2012* has drawn praise for its "leanness of sentiment" and "precision of speech" (Chiasson 86), Glück is most frequently mentioned alongside "civic" contemporaries like Robert Pinsky and Frank Bidart (Von Hallberg 103) or in relation to the so-called confessional generation preceding hers. Her readily



apprehended lyricism masks her powerful metalyricism. Glück's interrogation of lyric occasionally surfaces in knowing gestures, as when she comments in "Nostos" on the Wordsworthian conventions she deploys: "Fields. Smell of the tall grass, new cut. / As one expects of a lyric poet" (342).<sup>2</sup> More often, however, it takes shape in, rather than against, the enchantment of lyric speech: in the way a poem stops readers in their tracks with "Don't listen to me" or appeals to them to "[h]ear me out," confides that "I think I can remember / being dead" or reveals that "I speak / because I am shattered" (216, 245, 554, 271). Although Glück's best readers have been attentive to her poems' reflexive "spokenness" (Longenbach 66), it is perhaps not surprising that her experiments with poetic voice have been largely overlooked, given the recent claim that "attention to [poetry's] speech-dependence and fictionality" is "missing" in prevailing modes of poetic analysis (Müller-Zettelmann and Rubik 8).<sup>3</sup>

We can learn much, however, from the way these experiments expose what a recent symposium in the *Boston Review* has called "the limits of binary thinking about poetry" ("Opposing Terms"). Such thinking characterizes two critiques of lyric that would challenge the assumptions the New Criticism brought to lyric and lyric reading. In the 1970s and 1980s language poets rejected the stultifying conventions of the "scenic mode" of personal authentic experience and insight (Altieri 15), associating the scenic mode, and by extension all lyric, with an illusion of coherent selfhood. They disrupted lyric legibility to refuse that illusion and to combat what they considered the epiphanic lyric's commodification of poetry and positioning of reader as consumer. The modernist imperative that poetry be difficult was thus adapted, reinforced, and intensified in new historical and literary-historical circumstances. In these contexts, language's everyday character was devalued: for Charles Bernstein, "stan-

dard grammatical patterns" undesirably "limi[t]ed . . . interpretation" (36–37); for Ron Silliman, unresistant surfaces reduced reading to a "process of consuming information" amounting to "an act of submission" (45); for Marjorie Perloff, common speech, once perceived as natural and authentic, became an unsustainable ideal in the context of late-twentieth-century talk shows, leading to a preference for "syntactic [and other forms of] indeterminacy" ("Changing Face" 95). Battle lines were drawn between the "coercive, epiphanic mode . . . with its smug pretension to universality and its tendency to cast the poet as guardian to Truth" and poetry of rigorous, politicized difficulty (Hejinian 41).

For these poets and critics, intelligibility had come to imply expressivity and expressivity to imply an idealized, dehistoricized self as the origin of poetic speech. Early-twenty-first-century critiques of lyric by historically minded scholars, equally intent on exposing the New Criticism's critical assumptions and procedures, have sought to demystify lyric in similar terms. An influential critique of this kind, Virginia Jackson's *Dickinson's Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (2005), charts a literary history whereby the "ahistoricism" of the "New Critical [practice of] close reading became confused and identified with the ahistoricism of the lyric genre itself" (93). To read a poem as a lyric, Jackson argues, is to suppress its textuality and its historicity. Dickinson has seemed to exemplify the pathos of the isolated, private lyric self. Resisting the "lyric reading" by which a poem's context contracts to an "idealized scene of reading . . . identified with an idealized moment of expression," Jackson would restore Dickinson's poetry to the domestic and neighborly networks in which it circulated in her lifetime (7). If "a lyric reading practice" presumes poems "are written in view of a future horizon of interpretation," Jackson contends, "[e]verything about Dickinson's work"—particularly her habits of sending poems to correspondents

and at times composing on scraps of household paper—"contradicts that supposition" (57). Such a conclusion rests on a binary choice: poems are addressed either to living readers or to future readers; either a poem is an instance of communication between historical persons or it claims to represent unmediated subjectivity transcending history.

The *Boston Review*'s "Opposing Terms: A Symposium on the Poetic Limits of Binary Thinking," prompted by an essay by one of modern and contemporary poetry's most influential critics, Marjorie Perloff, suggests that those who write new poetry and comment on it are prone to employ binary terms yet impatient with their constraints.<sup>4</sup> This essay proposes that alternatives to binary thinking might be found in contemporary poetic practice and locates one such alternative in the poetry and poetics of Louise Glück. Glück's work disentangles aesthetic and philosophical complexity from surface difficulty and disavows poetry's intelligibility from notions of expressivity. Her poems simultaneously create the vivid illusion of voice and reveal its artifice. Reconceiving what might constitute closed and open modes and contravening presumed associations of speech with sincerity, they employ conversational tones and structures not as marks of authenticity but as aural patterns, as manifestations of language's interlocutory dimensions, and as implicit invitations to readerly response.

Two aspects of Glück's practice in particular command attention in this light. First, her poems produce a reflexive sense of happening in the present and emphasize the coming into being of a poetic speaker or lyric I through the conjunction of text and reader. This feature links Glück's poetics with the constructivism by which Perloff defined "twenty-first-century modernism": the constructivist text considers poetry "in its classical Greek meaning as *poesis* or making" and "understand[s] . . . language" not as "a vehicle or conduit for thoughts and feelings

outside and prior to it" but as "itself the site of meaning making" (*Twenty-First-Century Modernism* 9). Rooting this constructivism in the poetics of T. S. Eliot ("Tradition and the Individual Talent," "The Metaphysical Poets," and his early poetry), Perloff confines her examples of recent constructivist poets to Bernstein, Lyn Hejinian, and others associated with the language movement. "[P]erhaps the cardinal principle," she writes, "of American Language poetics . . . has been the dismissal of 'voice' as the foundational principle of lyric poetry" ("Language" 405); Glück's poetry invites us to experience and reflect on a constructivism of voice. Second, Glück's work conveys a powerful and distinctive sense of language as situated, shared action. Relishing the textures of conversation, what Robert Frost called the "sentence-sounds" of everyday speech (675), and oriented toward an audience (often an explicit you), her poems disclose lyric's sociality. Characterized by frequent use of direct address, by simple diction and syntax, and by an emphasis on how conventional grammar enables tone and inflection to alter significance, her work suggests an understanding of poetic language as allied to everyday language's situational, context-dependent character, described by philosophers of language including J. L. Austin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Stanley Cavell. Such an understanding belies the idea that lyric speech is isolated and monologic, rooting it instead in language as communal practice. The poetics to which these features give rise implicitly positions lyric to challenge dichotomies between voice and the recognition that the words from which poems are made are "*not one's own*" (Perloff, "Toward a Conceptual Lyric" 22), between a lyric I and a powerful sense of how language's communal character shatters unitary, isolated speech.

The distinctiveness of Glück's experiments with voice and the currency of their implications emerge clearly from an examina-



tion of the rhetoric of a new hybridity of lyric and language modes, showcased in several anthologies published in the first decade of the twenty-first century—including Claudia Rankine and Juliana Spahr's *American Women Poets in the Twenty-First Century: Where Lyric Meets Language* (2002), Rankine and Lisa Sewell's *American Poets in the Twenty-First Century: The New Poetics* (2007), Reginald Shepherd's *Lyric Postmodernisms: An Anthology of Contemporary Innovative Poetics* (2008), and Cole Swensen and David St. John's *American Hybrid: A Norton Anthology of New Poetry* (2009). The entrenched assumptions that separate lyric modes (speech-based, expressive, with ties to Romanticism) from experimental modes (suspicious of voice, inheriting modernism's most challenging innovations) are manifest in the discourse that should overcome them. In articulating the new hybridity, the editors of these anthologies have largely reinforced the link among poetic intelligibility, the transparent referentiality of language, and a simplified, unified first person. Hybrid discourse would reclaim lyric by assigning to it values previously ascribed to experiment—above all, aversion to surface clarity. Entry fees remain high. In Spahr's account, the lyric element is "interiority and/or intimate speech that avoids confession, clear speech, or common sense," and experimental "[i]nnovation" entails "avoidance of linear narrative development, of meditative confessionalism, and of the singular voice" (2): both modes eschew clarity or plainness. "Today's hybrid poem," Swensen writes, might combine "a stable first person" with disrupted temporal sequence or scrambled syntax or join "illogicality or fragmentation" with "the strict formal rules of a sonnet or a villanelle" (xxi), while Sewell's new poets "deliberately and self-consciously engag[e] with the lyric tradition but also question . . . that tradition through techniques of disruption, diversion, and resistance" (3). Silent about modes of questioning not conveyed by difficulty and

disruption, editors of hybrid poetry trace predictable literary histories.<sup>5</sup> Although St. John speaks of rejecting the labels "avant-garde, postmodern, New Formalist, . . . mainstream" (xxvii), his coeditor, Swensen, writes of the legacy of a "split" between two models: on the one hand, "the poem as a vehicle for conveying thoughts, images, and ideas initiated elsewhere" and "language as an accurate roadmap or system of referring to situations and things in the real world" and, on the other hand, "the poem as an event on the page" and "language . . . as a site of meaning in its own right" (xviii). Such a division relies on a polarity that misreads twentieth-century poems: to suggest that Frost (Swensen's example) regards language primarily as "an accurate roadmap" or "vehicle" is to ignore the "performative" dimension of his work (Poirier xii) and to elide the puns, riddling parables, and allusive, musical, and ritualistic effects that make "Spring Pools" exemplify for Jonathan Culler a lyric ill served by New Critical strategies of reading ("Why Lyric?" 203–04). Such accounts of hybridity confound modernism's legacy and circumscribe lyric's complexity.

Dismissed by detractors as "mainstream" (Perloff, "Language Poetry" 419) or late Romantic (Sadoff 99), Glück is not normally considered in the context of the new hybridity. However, her essays comment with wit and bite on the terrain mapped by her "experimental" peers, sharing their aversion to the complacency of the scenic style. In the forewords she wrote as judge of the Yale Series of Younger Poets from 2003 to 2010, Glück articulates tensions and paradoxes that resonate with but also correct those of the language-lyric hybridity that emerged concurrently. Ken Chen's *Juvenilia*, for example, is "exhilaratingly modern (anti-catharsis, anti-epiphany) while at the same time never losing [its] attachment to voice" (Foreword [*Juvenilia*] xvii); Jessica Fisher's *Frail-Craft* shows a "marked taste for experiment" and "intelligent suspicion of worn forms," but its "persistent

strangeness" is "not a matter of the shrewdly confused surface or of opacity" (Foreword [*Frail-Craft*] xvi): her work "elude[s]" an easy grasp yet remains "plain-spoken" (xvi, xi). Glück's polemically titled essay "Against Sincerity" (1993) contrasts honesty and sincerity with "experiment[ation]" (*Proofs* 45): honesty and sincerity "refer back to the already known" (33), while experiments, "not wed to any one outcome," entail "discover[y]" (45). Glück rejects a poetics whose practitioners "claustrophobically oversee or bully or dictate response" (45); like more familiar critiques of the sincere lyric, such as Hejinian's description of "coercive" poems of sincerity, the "closed text" . . . in which all the elements of the work are directed toward a single reading" (42), Glück's critique resists "the restrictive governing of meaning by will and logic" (Foreword [*Cuckoo*] ix) and the "inertia of emphatic closure" in poems "weighted at the end with insight" (Foreword [*Frail-Craft*] xv). At the same time, however, her essays challenge poetry's dominant markers of philosophical ambition and champion work that innovates outside recognized experimental forms. Wryly observing that contemporary poetry whose "style" "is too lively, too grammatically clear, . . . not, on the surface, difficult"—however "learned and sophisticated," however "philosophic[ally] . . . radical" it may be—"does not conform to the established definitions of intellectual daring," she implies that established daring may not be daring at all ("Ersatz Thought").

Consider, in these contexts, the experiment Glück undertakes in *The Wild Iris* (1992). Glück's voice constructivism is nowhere so vivid as in this volume, which is characterized by three kinds of speakers: flowers and plants; a gardener, many of whose poems are "matins" and "vespers" addressed to a god; and a speaker, perhaps divine, whose poems are given titles evoking time, seasons, and weather ("Clear Morning," "End of Winter"). The poems whose speakers are flowers

or plants conspicuously stage their own coming into being. These speakers ask both to be heard and to be seen through. "At the end of my suffering," "The Wild Iris" begins, "there was a door."

Hear me out: that which you call death  
I remember.

. . . . .  
It is terrible to survive  
as consciousness  
buried in the dark earth.

Then it was over: that which you fear, being  
a soul and unable  
to speak, ending abruptly. . . .

The poem sketches the barest spring scene for this emergence: "branches of the pine shifting," "the stiff earth / bending a little," "weak sun," "birds." Its closing lines fuse the story told with the act of telling:

You who do not remember  
passage from the other world  
I tell you I could speak again: whatever  
returns from oblivion returns  
to find a voice:

from the center of my life came  
a great fountain, deep blue  
shadows on azure seawater. (245)

Textual voice is this poem's subject: "Hear me out," "I tell you," "I could speak." These lines do not so much tell a story of the wild iris's waking from dormancy as enact the coming into being of fictive speech, and secondarily of a poetic speaker, in the reading. Reflecting on the emergence of an I, the poem treats poetic voice as a matter less of origin than of effect: an evanescent, contingent effect produced by text and reader. Inviting readers to experience this effect and to be conscious of the means of experiencing it, "The Wild Iris" marries "lyric enchantment" with "experimental interrogation," in the words of the poet Reginald Shepherd (xi).<sup>6</sup> Without the forms of disjunction and difficulty that,



at least since the 1970s, have become the most readily recognizable means of investigating voice in poetry, Glück discloses the process by which textual voice is constructed.

Despite the closing image's allusion to Wordsworth's spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings that originates from emotion recollected in tranquillity, lyric voice in "The Wild Iris" does not originate in an uncomplicated remembering; the claim "I remember" is belied by the voice's arising from "oblivion." As T. S. Eliot described such a process, in the writing of a poem "something germinating" is "transformed into" and "replaced by" the poem's words, words unanticipated, for the poet "does not know what he has to say until he has said it" (*On Poetry* 106–07). Eliot's account suggests a model of poetic creativity that involves an openness to processes (psychic, linguistic, historical) outside the poet's control; the same is true of Glück's poem and of her related prose. For Eliot the process of composition is heuristic and transformational; once the words have been found, the "thing" or "creative germ" "has disappeared, replaced by a poem" (106); Glück calls poetic composition "discovery" and the poet a "scientist . . . not wed to any one outcome" (*Proofs* 35, 45): "The only illuminations are like Psyche's, who did not know what she'd find" (45). The resulting verse (signaled in "The Wild Iris" by the doubled word *returns*) does not so much point to or express a thing in the world or in the self as bring something new into being: a "new compound" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 41) or "a new element" "detached" from its maker (Glück, *Proofs* 91, 16), to be "hand[ed] over" in a "final separation . . . from the author . . . to an unknown audience" (Eliot, *On Poetry* 109). Poems, Glück writes, are "like experiments, which the reader is freely invited to recreate in his own mind" (*Proofs* 45): in the experience of reading, the creative experiment "returns," but in new contexts, with unforeseen results. Constructivist in the sense Perloff (who draws on Eliot) describes (*Twenty-First-Century Mod-*

*ernism* 9), this poetics further considers the poem as event and reading as performance: literary invention, Derek Attridge elaborates, entails an opening to "the unknown," the unanticipated, the hitherto excluded or occluded, and this opening "is experienced . . . as an event . . . by the reader (who is, in the first instance, the writer reading or articulating the words as they emerge)." The work of art enables a like event to "*happen . . . to the reader*" (59), who, by "performing" and "being performed by" the work, "experience[s]" the "singularity, alterity, and inventiveness of the work . . . in the present" (136).

"The Red Poppy" draws readers' attention to this kind of event, simultaneously engaging and dismantling expectations we bring to lyric speech:

The great thing  
is not having  
a mind. Feelings:  
oh, I have those; they  
govern me. I have  
a lord in heaven  
called the sun, and open  
for him, showing him  
the fire of my own heart. . . .

The poppy asks, "What could such glory be / if not a heart?," then addresses readers:

Oh my brothers and sisters,  
were you like me once, long ago,  
before you were human? Did you  
permit yourselves  
to open once, who would never  
open again? Because in truth  
I am speaking now  
the way you do. I speak  
because I am shattered. (271)

The guileless poppy showing her heart suggests a Romantic and post-Romantic lyric speaker overflowing with emotion. But by asking, "What could such glory be / if not a heart?" the poem throws into doubt the idea that poetic display expresses psychological

depths. To speak because “shattered” might be to utter a cry of emotional devastation. But it might equally be to recognize that to speak is to be “open” to and broken open by language that constitutes, as much as expresses, subjectivity, language received, learned, fundamentally shared; under these conditions, “I” can speak only by breaking the boundaries of an I conceived as self-enclosed. This text insists on its ability to speak. But it acknowledges that it speaks only insofar as “you” encounter and experience a line like “I am speaking now” in what William Waters has called the “*now* of reading” (149). Read as well as red, the poppy comes to life in such a performance.

“The Red Poppy” enacts a literary performativity, in which the reader, “performing the work, [is] taken through its performance of . . . linguistic power” (Attridge 98). But it also exemplifies how, in Glück’s poems, the event that happens in the instance of reading frequently represents what ordinary-language philosophy calls illocutionary utterance: that is, the speech acts in her poems are oriented toward interaction with an audience rather than toward information given, narrative recounted, or truth asserted.<sup>7</sup> The poetics that corresponds with a focus on audience interaction helps us to see past lyric’s supposed isolation to its potential for what Siobhan Phillips usefully names “situated exchange” (346). Characterized by illocutionary structures—questions, demands, replies to implied elements in a conversation, second-person address—Glück’s poetics reflects an orientation toward language that shares affinities with Wittgenstein’s dictum that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (43). Her poems of address and conversation make clear that such use occurs between language users, that, in Cavell’s terms, the “primary fact of natural language is that it is something spoken, spoken together” (*Must* 33), not so much a system of reference as an interactive web.<sup>8</sup> Reliant less on distinctive individual

words than on “the possibilities of context” (Glück, *Proofs* 4), her poems implicitly follow Austin’s principle of asking “*what we should* [i.e., would or do] *say when*” (181).

An attunement to what we say when demands what Cavell names the faculty of ear. When he encountered Austin, Cavell had recently given up a career in music; as Cavell’s autobiography recounts, that Austin’s philosophical “practice had to do, in its own way, with the possession of an ear, was surely part of its attraction and authority” (*Little* 323–24). Like Cavell, and like Frost, who expressed the idea that “[t]he ear is the only true writer and the only true reader” (677), Glück possesses and values an ear for the textures of everyday language, preferring, by her own account, the “rules” of syntax to the “romance” of “music” (*Proofs* 8), relishing “timing, . . . the way ideas are held in suspension” and the subtle implications of “tone” (81, 39). From *Vita Nova*’s rueful analysis (“Interesting how we fall in love: / in my case, absolutely. Absolutely, and, alas, often—” [369]) to *The Seven Ages*’s relentless intimations of mortality (“You will want the earth, then more of the earth—,” “it will feed you, it will ravish you, / it will not keep you alive” [421]), from the comic petulance of a gardener bargaining, in her “*vespers*,” for better growing conditions (“other regions get / twelve weeks of summer” [279]) to an earthworm’s precisely articulated didacticism, reminiscent of Marianne Moore, in *A Village Life* (“it is the nature of the mind / to defend its eminence, as it is the nature of those / who walk on the surface to fear the depths—” [607]), her work’s tonal variations depend on unfolding syntactic patterns, “subtleties of . . . pacing” (*Proofs* 4), nuances of inflection.

The distance between what Glück calls ear and the ideal of “sincerity or naturalness,” the “anecdotal” quality, of the scenic mode (Altieri 15) becomes clear when she praises Fisher’s work for its “extraordinary sensitivity to English syntax,” its “perfection of ear” (Foreword [*Frail-Craft*] xvi). Fisher’s visually



striking, playfully disorienting, intellectual and intertextual poems show, Glück observes, a “marked taste for experiment” and refuse “meaning like a kite with its neat string of explication attached”; they nonetheless savor the rhythms of meaning making. The same is true of Glück’s work. Ear for her is a matter primarily of grammatical rhythm, of what Frost called “the abstract sound of sense,” best attained “from voices behind a door that cuts off the words” (664). These patterns appealed to Frost as patterns. He invites a correspondent to ask himself “how these sentences would sound without the words in which they are embodied”:

You mean to tell me you can’t read?  
I said no such thing.  
Well read then.  
You’re not my teacher. (665)

Glück’s poems at times produce patterns as unmistakable as Frost’s sentence sounds, as in these dialogues between divorcing spouses in *Meadowlands* (1996):

Why is it always family with you?  
Can’t we ever be two adults? (323)  
You know why you cook? Because  
you like control. A person who cooks  
is a person who likes  
to create debt. (348)  
I stopped liking artichokes when I  
stopped eating  
butter. Fennel  
I never liked. (310)

Intonation here not merely expresses oppositional postures but also constitutes them. Frost called the sound of sense “the abstract vitality of our speech,” “pure sound—pure form” (665). Although not traditionally musical if we conceive music as aligned exclusively with poetry’s nonsemantic features (as in a line of modern poetics descended from Mallarmé), sentence sounds nonetheless seek a performative reading and thus suggest lyr-

ic’s sound-based rootedness in performance, as well as, more broadly, the experiential, sensory character of literary language. Ear, then, works with this poetics’ lyric and literary performativity.

Although Frost’s and Glück’s sentences may convey emotional or psychological attitudes, what is at stake is not their expressivity, from the inside out, but their recognizability, from the outside in. The question of ear thus opens onto ways of thinking about the relation of language to subjectivity that bypass the binary choice between colluding with “the cult of personality, of a subject somehow *outside* language” (Perloff, *Wittgenstein’s Ladder* 8) and concluding that “[l]anguage produces us, not the other way around” (Blasing 5). An ear for “*what we should say when*” accepts language as essentially shared and fundamentally enacted, located in concrete instances of exchange. In Cavell’s terms, “Talking together is acting together, not . . . transferring unspeakable messages or essences from the inside of one closed chamber to the inside of another” (*Must* 33); language is less externalized or internalized than it is part of the social fabric, a way of “acting together.” Breaking down an easy distinction between inside and outside, David Schalkwyk points out that to recognize what we would say in a given situation, we must be able to hear with the mind’s ear; a poetics of ear presumes that, as he writes in discussing the relation of Shakespeare’s sonnets to his drama, the “‘inner ear’ can hear tone, volume, timbre, pitch, even accent. These . . . are traces of exteriority that are borne in the very silent listening of the deepest inwardness” (106). Pondering the everyday phenomenon of “inner speech,” silent but “heard by its possessor,” Denise Riley finds that “as soon as I try to overhear myself, I can detect my usual accents and the timbre of my voice” (“Voice” 58–59): thus, we cannot consider silent speech and articulate speech “opposites, able to be tidily partitioned by strict interiority versus exteriority” (61). In J. S. Mill’s model of poetry

as something overheard, the self's speaking to itself in moments of solitude, unconscious of a listener, inner speech is explicitly monadic and monologic; for Riley, by contrast, speaking to oneself, "inner speech[,] is evidence of the sociability of the language" ("Voice" 81). Understanding such sociability "matter-of-factly" rather than as alienating "lack" or loss (88), Riley (who draws on thinkers as diverse as William James, Merleau-Ponty, and Voloshinov) rejects the "usual antithesis (crudely, in 'continental' versus analytic philosophy) between language as speaking us, and our status as freely choosing users of language," an antithesis that inflects the language-lyric divide (*Impersonal Passion* 3).

With their investment in dialogue, their unmistakable sentence sounds, and their combination of vivid spokenness and reflexive textuality, Glück's poems give experiential, affective texture to such analyses. The poems of *Ararat* (1990), a seemingly confessional sequence diagnosing family dysfunction, repeatedly draw attention to speech acts: "I'll tell you something," the volume's central speaker says; "I'll tell you what I meant. . . . Believe me" (204, 203, 231). In a striking instance, "The Untrustworthy Speaker" begins, "Don't listen to me." It continues, "When I speak passionately, / . . . I'm least to be trusted"; "[w]hen I'm quiet, . . . the truth emerges" (216). In a version of the Cretan-liar paradox, this speaker is impossible to resist: to turn away is to follow her directive, but to listen is to fall under the spell of her speech. The poem engages us primarily through the act of speaking, the communicative game it plays, the eventness whereby the reader is called on to become aware of listening or not listening. These features are more significant than the speaker's story; unlike the typical speaker of dramatic monologue (Browning's Duke) or the unreliable narrator of fiction (Nabokov's Humbert Humbert), Glück's speaker preempts the call to fill in the gaps she tries to hide, telling us what she cannot

see, what her story will not contain.<sup>9</sup> "The Untrustworthy Speaker" frames lyric as a seductive, vulnerable, canny performance of voice, neither a "decontextualized expression of subjectivity" nor a "dramatic monologue with a speaker whose situation, attitude, and goals we should novelistically reconstruct," the two dominant models to which Culler's reconsideration of lyric seeks alternatives ("Lyric" 885). Although "The Untrustworthy Speaker" means its reader to be aware of these paradigms, it opens up a performative, illocutionary axis for lyric outside them.

*Ararat*'s most arresting metalyric alters the pattern of address to a generalized reader or listener. Like that of "The Untrustworthy Speaker," the title of "Child Crying Out" draws attention to a kind of speech, but the speech act it names is not the one the poem performs. "Child Crying Out" is spoken by a mother to her young son. "You're asleep now," it begins; "your eyelids quiver." He has "pushed the covers away," but though his body is exposed, she reflects on what she cannot see:

As for your thoughts, your dreams—

I'll never understand  
the claim of a mother  
on a child's soul.

"[I]n love," she recalls, she "made that mistake,"

taking  
some wild sound to be  
the soul exposing itself—

But not with you,  
even when I held you constantly.  
You were born, you were far away.

Whatever those cries meant,  
they came and went  
whether I held you or not,  
whether I was there or not.

The soul is silent.  
If it speaks at all  
it speaks in dreams.

(232)



Rightly observing that “[c]ontemplating a mother’s relationship to a child causes Glück to question the fundamental nature of lyric itself,” DeSales Harrison takes this poem to make the “momentous claim” that the soul is silent, its “way of speaking . . . severed from waking language” (195). This claim, however, is the speaker’s, not the poem’s. Convinced that her son’s cries neither expose his soul nor solicit her attention, the mother concludes that “[t]he soul is silent” or “speaks only in dreams.” Her conclusion takes the child’s cries as continuous with and representative of language. Yet the poem’s way of using language belies the choice between the cries expressing the soul and the soul’s silence: although the cries are unintelligible, the poem is not. Relying on everyday diction and syntax, the poem demonstrates a trust in ordinary words, not to express a soul but to recognize one: a social, implicitly dialogic act.

Addressing the child as “you,” the poem rests on a faith that language can foster the child’s emerging subjectivity: he is a you before he is an I. The psychoanalytic valences of this process have implications for paradigms of lyric. Better described by object-relations-influenced models than by the Lacanian paradigms dominant in literary studies, those psychoanalytic dimensions speak to the essentially social nature of subjectivity.<sup>10</sup> Glück’s “You were born, you were far away” conveys with breathtaking simplicity the finality and wonder of birth and of the child’s separate subjectivity. “As for your thoughts, your dreams—” approaches cliché; this blankness renders the mother’s experience of coming up against the child’s unknowability, his essential privacy or solitude, which the cries do nothing to diminish. This privacy is that of a “you”: it is a privacy that is understood socially. Its implications differ from those of Mill’s paradigm of an isolation uncontaminated by others’ eyes and ears, which is still presumed to be lyric’s norm by critiques of lyric reading. The mother accepts

that she does not know the child’s thoughts or dreams, but she continues to speak to him. Addressing the child in the present about his past as an infant, the poem enfolds his changing relation to language and anticipates being read by him in the future. Language does not “expos[e]” the soul, but it forges relation in ways characterized both by “mistake[s]” and by “love.”

“Child Crying Out,” then, contradicts its title and rejects conceptions of lyric poets as infantile, in the manner of Barbara Johnson’s provocative paradigm; it speaks from a position other than the child’s.<sup>11</sup> Although it has one speaker, the poem is not monologic; it investigates language’s mediation and, more important, its construction of relation. This lyric undoes its own closure: a full account of how it explores language and subjectivity contradicts the certainty of the final lines. This speaker—unlike that of “The Untrustworthy Speaker” or “The Wild Iris”—addresses an interlocutor who is ostensibly not the reader, a sleeping child, and although the addressee is unresponsive, his silence is only contingent (he may wake; he may grow up) and not inherent (like a nightingale or a skylark, or an addressee who is dead); “Child Crying Out” is thus not an apostrophe but one of those poems “that say *you* to a human being,” simultaneously addressing contemporary and future readers, and that Waters has theorized as a significant category of lyric (1, 25). The contradiction between the cries and the poem’s intelligible speech suggests an orientation toward a you who hears the poem, an openness to reading and to the future.

A similar structure of address obtains in “Sunset,” a metalyric in *The Wild Iris* that imagines a god’s reply to human prayers. The speaker’s “great happiness,” the poem asserts, is “the sound your voice makes / calling to me even in despair”; his “sorrow,” “that I cannot answer you / in speech you accept as mine.” The emphasis then shifts from my “speech” to “your . . . language”:

You have no faith in your own language.  
 So you invest  
 authority in signs  
 you cannot read with any accuracy.

This point of potential “despair” gives way to affirmation: “your voice,” the speaker confirms, “reaches me always.”

And I answer constantly,  
 my anger passing  
 as winter passes. My tenderness  
 should be apparent to you  
 in the breeze of the summer evening  
 and in the words that become  
 your own response. (298)

Like “Child Crying Out,” “Sunset” contrasts two models of language. In one, “signs” must be authorized by a god function; in the other, language as found, received, and used suffices: “Sunset” stages a competition between “distrust of language” and “trust of ordinary human speech” (Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America* 32). The mother in “Child Crying Out” must confront the recalcitrance of the child’s cries and accept that they, and potentially the language they prefigure, are inexpressive; “Sunset” raises the possibility of language as noncommunicative, failing to reach another. Yet the statement “I cannot answer you / in speech you accept as mine” contradicts itself, establishing the communication it calls impossible.

“Sunset” further posits language as untethered from any verifiable origin. Glück does not let us forget that a poet constructs this speech: the god may not exist; the addressee—that is, the poet—has only her “own language,” her “own response,” through which she fabricates what may be merely the illusions of illocution, reciprocity, and meaning. Yet those valences of doubt and instability are only part of the story. Against a philosophy of language based on “signs,” “Sunset” offers a model of language as relational: human “calling” establishes a connection that the poem’s

“tenderness” reciprocates. Like “Child Crying Out,” “Sunset” uses ordinary language, relying on simple syntax and a limited vocabulary—nearly a quarter of the poem’s words, for instance, are pronouns. That these common words acquire meaning and emotional resonance in this way affirms a Cavellian “trust in ordinary human speech”: “You have no faith in your own language,” but “Sunset” enacts this faith, by constructing a context that makes the accusation emotionally credible.

The final word, “response,” “invest[s]” not in language as “signs” but in language as a participatory web, a set of shared practices that is, in Wai Chee Dimock’s words, “contingent at its core,” reflecting “our customs, our communities, our shared agreements about how things are” (67). The failures of communication the poem transposes to a vertical, human-divine axis attest to the fragility and contingency of everyday communication and thus of the world we build through the language we share. In Cavell’s terms, “Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon” an ability to “project” words into new contexts, where they establish “shar[ed] routes of interest and feeling, . . . senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment.” To understand that “[n]othing insures” the prevalence of this ability is to confront a “vision . . . as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying” (*Must* 52).<sup>12</sup> This simple, difficult poem, resting on a circulation of shared words, captures something of this precarious communion.

From another perspective, “the words that become / your own response” refers to the poem itself. The brief pause created by the line break after “become” results in a performative moment in which the poem’s words become the reader’s. Insofar as the ending sends the reader back to the words just read, it intensifies the poem’s status as happening. Insofar as readers hear the last lines’ invitation to “respon[d]” and feel addressed, called on to continue the dialogue—their “response”



invited but not determined—the ending projects that performative moment into an unpredictable, undetermined future.<sup>13</sup>

Glück's constructivist poetics of voice and her illocutionary poetics of plain surfaces, ear, and dialogue enable us to trace lines of correspondence and influence between oppositional camps in and across generations; the examples I offer in closing sketch, rather than exhaust, such potential lineages and affinities. Attuned to the foregrounding of language as context-dependent and conversational (a practice we can trace back to Frost and Moore, among others),<sup>14</sup> we find this feature not only in the work of a contemporary like Frank Bidart, whose prose syntax can seem disconcertingly ordinary, but also in that of John Ashbery. Ashbery's poems are conversational in texture despite their logical disjunctions and shifts of register; overtly concerned with representation (maps, instruction manuals, paintings, film), his work is no less concerned with communication. Many of his poems play, lightly but not quite ironically, on the impersonal intimacy of poetic address and on the performance of reading: "I hope you're not listening (but you are, / somewhere)" (52). More generally, with their frequent questions and interruptions and their slippages between distinct, but equally recognizable, conventions of conversational, literary, journalistic, and other discourses, they extend an ongoing invitation to share the pleasurable unpredictable process of meaning making, even if meanings are no sooner made than dissolved.

Glück's constructivist, intimately engaging speakers bring into relief an inventive investigation of textual voice—as distinct from ambitions (for example) to emulate visual abstraction, to include history, or to claim new subject matter—as one of modern American poetry's lineages. This lineage cuts across avant-garde-mainstream and modernist-confessional divides. We might consider that *The Wild Iris's* flower poems lyricize these

lines from the opening of *The Waste Land*: "Winter kept us warm, covering / Earth in forgetful snow . . ." (lines 5–6).<sup>15</sup> In separating Eliot's investment in poetic voice's constructed and constructivist character from his works' most overt discontinuities, Glück does not bypass Eliot's experimentalism: she adapts it, innovating within her literary-historical context, where difficult surfaces, inherited partly from Eliot, are the norm. In her work, an Eliotic poetics of heuristic composition and of voice untethered from a stable origin results not in polyglot intertextual fragments but in speakers whose vivid presence exists in tension with the self-undoing analyses the poems perform. Such a conjunction makes perceptible a connection between Eliot's emergent textual-voice effects and effects such as those of Sylvia Plath's "Elm," in which a tree confides, "I am inhabited by a cry" (193), or of the same poet's self-staging, self-destructing "Lady Lazarus." Although many of Plath's critics have been blind to that poem's reflexivity, its eponymous speaker's "theatrical / / Comeback in broad day" is a trick hiding in plain sight: Plath conjures a first-person speaker into being ("These are my hands / My knees"), then the poem's "big strip tease" deconstructs this speaker until nothing is left but "air" (247).<sup>16</sup> "The Untrustworthy Speaker" and "Sunset," whose god exists only in the words of his addressee's response, illuminate, too, the unsettling qualities of a less discussed poem like Robert Lowell's "Records." Enclosed entirely in quotation marks, "Records" takes the form of a personal letter, whose authorship is thus called into question. Implicitly addressed to Lowell by his wife, the letter reflects on its writer's coming upon some "records . . . of your voice," beginning to listen to them, and immediately ceasing to listen. "Records" reads as a painfully intimate revelation, a love letter from wife to divorcing husband reflecting on recordings that affect her like "the voice of the beloved who had died" (681); it reads equally, however, as a

found poem in which the author's voice plays no expressive or subjective role but instead is an absent, mechanically recorded, and unheard object. Observing such effects expands our sense of the possibilities for poetry that would scrutinize voice without dismissing it.

When Glück's red poppy contends that "I am speaking now / the way you do" and her white rose asserts that "I am not like you, I have only / my body for a voice" (271, 289), these poetic voices speak out of and correct a moment when lyricism is frequently understood to preclude a sense of language as a communally binding act and to disallow reflexive awareness of the fictive voice's dependence on a textual body. In the poetics these instances exemplify, words, grounded in possible situations and conversations, aim less at a (prior) target reference than at a (future) answering utterance, and lyric, spoken only insofar as it is heard—that is, read—reflects human, social contingency and a literary potential to address conditions and contexts beyond its own. In the encounter Glück's texts invite, the strangeness of lyric voice emerges through the workings of ordinary language; the constructivist performance is at stake, not the coherence of the writer's (or the reader's) self; and, in the eventfulness of now, the future is anticipated but not foreclosed.

## NOTES

For their thoughts on this essay, I am grateful to Charles Altieri, Stephen Burt, Ron Bush, Jeri Johnson, and Siobhan Phillips.

1. Welcome exceptions include recent work on lyric as recurring performance (Miller, *Reading*; Culler, "Lyric"), on lyric's origins in performance (Brewster), and on lyric's addressivity (Waters) and sociality (Izenberg).

2. All citations of Glück's poems refer to *Poems 1962–2012*.

3. For suggestive attention to voice in Glück, see Halpern, *Everyday and Prophetic* and "Louise Glück's 'I'"; Harrison; Hedley; Longenbach; Spiegelman; Townsend; and Warren.

4. The essay in question was "Poetry on the Brink." Calling attention to a "citational" mode in 2010 (*Unoriginal Genius*) and "a conceptual turn" in 2012 ("Poetry" and "Toward a Conceptual Lyric"), Perloff has continued to set "voice" against linguistic sensitivity, metalinguistic sophistication, and poetic inventiveness.

5. Sharing Keller's resistance to the "problematically tidy model" of thesis (lyric), antithesis (language), and synthesis (7), I wish further to challenge the nature of the divide.

6. Shepherd's terms suggest the continued salience of Charles Altieri's analysis of how poetry seeks to negotiate the competing demands of "lyricism"—with its desire to imagine ideal attributes of self and world (and their complementarity)—and "lucidity," which is aligned with Enlightenment reason's demystifying but illuminating power (Altieri 13).

7. J. L. Austin defines the "illocutionary" character of a speech act as its ability to perform the function of "asking or answering a question, giving some information or an assurance or a warning, announcing a verdict or an intention, pronouncing a sentence, making an appointment or an appeal or a criticism"; illocution is "performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something" (99–101). Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* challenged philosophy's tendency to approach language primarily in its constative function of statement or description. Austin's strict sense of the performative (the classic example is the marriage ceremony's "I do") should be distinguished from the literary performativity of Attridge's model. Culler describes literary "performativity" as "less a singular act accomplished once and for all" than a potential for "repetition" (resembling Judith Butler's development of the concept) through literal performances (of music or drama) or in "acts of reading or recollection" (*Literary* 163).

8. Perloff's *Wittgenstein's Ladder* aligns Wittgenstein's philosophy with the language writing of Silliman, Hejinian, and others. Glück's plain style suggests a Wittgensteinian exploration of "how 'humanity' in fact *does* use language, given," Perloff maintains, quoting Ian Hacking, "that the language we use is 'first of all public and firmly rooted in what we do together'" (182).

9. The title announces a dramatic monologue, but, as Keniston points out, the poem is a lyric—not, however, because the speaker is difficult to distinguish from the poet ("Fluidity" 310). Although I come to different conclusions, I share Keniston's interest in "Glück's intelligent preoccupation with questions central to the tradition and continued viability of the lyric" (*Overheard Voices* 75).

10. For these models, see, e.g., Winnicott; Mitchell; and Benjamin.

11. Citing Lacan on language development and Culler on apostrophe, Johnson argues that "lyric poetry itself—summed up in the figure of apostrophe—comes to look like the fantastically intricate history of endless elaborations and displacements of the single cry, 'Mama!'" (38).



12. The implications of Cavell's work for recent poetry that Gardner describes differ from those I pursue here.

13. Although it is not my primary consideration in drawing attention to this poem, the temporal recursiveness that this moment prompts us to consider—each time readers encounter the poem, they find their response anticipated and invited—forms a suggestive link with recent accounts of the way literature, lyric in particular, might become differently meaningful in multiple contexts. These accounts suggest that the future the poem projects, although unforeseeable in its historical particulars, need not for that reason be understood as ahistorical. Armstrong writes of the “open-endedness [that] is essential to the ability of [literary] works to survive and be transmitted to and read by audiences that do not yet exist” (213). Attridge calls this open-endedness the work's “alterity” and “inventiveness,” which recur differently in the performances that different readings constitute (157). Miller contends that Dickinson “conceive[d] of a poem as . . . much like a script that gives rise to numerous performances” (“Dickinson's Structured Rhythms” 403), not transcendent but “meaningful beyond a single context” (*Reading* 12).

14. On the “illocutionary, directly interactional and vernacular elements” of Moore's verse, see Miller, *Marianne Moore* (62).

15. Glück's 2006 volume *Averno*, which retells the story of Demeter and Persephone, returns to the trope of speech from a place of “oblivion” that is both death-like and fertile, enabling the birth of something new (487–95). The volume's bleak, charred landscapes and engagement with fertility myths recall *The Waste Land*, while the first-person speech, which is sometimes aligned with Persephone, suggests a conception of the lyric I as intermittent, discontinuous, recurrent.

16. Forbes gives an account of the poem's reception (112–14).

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# Taking the Smooth with the Rough: Texture, Emotion, and the Other Postmodernism

PANSY DUNCAN

WHAT WAS POSTMODERNISM? IF LARGELY ECLIPSED AS AN AESTHETIC practice, might it not yet teach us something as a critical object?<sup>1</sup> And, if so, what might postmodern aesthetics tell us about the emotional and affective formations that currently magnetize critical interest across the humanities? Probing these questions, I turn to the final scene of David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996), the controversial screen adaptation of J. G. Ballard's no less controversial 1973 novella—and a film whose crystallization of canonical critical models of postmodernism makes it uniquely if unexpectedly useful to the effort to reappraise them. In keeping with the perverse spectacular and narrative predilections of the film as a whole, the scene in question finds the protagonists, James Ballard (James Spader) and his wife, Catherine (Deborah Kara Unger), in a carefully contrived car chase that culminates in James's deliberately driving his wife's silver coupe off the freeway and down a grassy embankment. Yet like many another ripple in what Jesse Fox Mayshark has christened the "cultural tide of pop postmodernism" (1), the scene's dramatically and morally inflammatory content is matched by a certain formal flatness (Adams; Dery 44; Jones)—the same "flatness or depthlessness" that Fredric Jameson, writing in 1990, traced to postmodern aesthetics' renunciation of hermeneutic depth (*Postmodernism* 9). The formal strategies through which the film sustains this flatness are readily isolated. Cinematographically, the scene favors the aloof, aerial detachment of the extreme long shot over the facial close-ups through which films conventionally secure meaning and identification. Whether descending toward the grassy median strip to disclose Catherine's bloodied body and mangled car or reascending into the end credits, the mobile, crane-mounted camera maintains a crisp, unimpeachable distance from its subjects that invites us to consider the

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image as an aesthetic surface rather than as a representation of a spatially and psychologically rounded world. Musically, the relentless, one-note repetitiveness of Howard Shore's spare synthetic strings muffles the tonal cues through which we are customarily asked to apprehend symbolic and psychological significance. Characterologically, meanwhile, Spader's stiff, mannequin's gait exudes none of the emotional "urgency" one might expect of a man who has just witnessed his wife tumble down a freeway embankment (Fisher 76). Any effort to infer motive or meaning from Spader's gestures is blocked by the "bored, abstracted, trancelike emptiness of expression" with which he surveys the battered interior of the car before finally turning his gaze to the prostrate Unger (Beard 394).

For Jameson, of course, as for the legion of critics who followed in his wake, the hermeneutic flatness of the postmodern image was the all too natural bedfellow of emotional flatness (*Postmodernism* 10).<sup>2</sup> This almost axiomatic equation of flatness and emotionlessness, in turn, has left an incisive impression on the reception of *Crash*. Informing scholarly consensus on the film's tone, now powerfully contoured by a critical rubric of "affectless alienation," "emotional vacuity" (Beard 384), "cool detached anality," and "boredom" (Harpold; Botting and Wilson 83), it also marks scholarly consensus on *Crash*'s narrative, which has congealed across repeated critical retellings into the story of a couple who enlist the help of a charismatic crash fetishist, Vaughan (Elias Koteas), to reinvigorate an emotional and sexual life impoverished by postmodernity's flat, depthless planes. Yet the consequences of this critical tendency to encode postmodern hermeneutic flatness in the register of emotional deficiency extend far beyond the reception of *Crash*. To the extent that "affect" and "emotion" have emerged as star terms in the diverse, interdisciplinary constellation of work perhaps best clustered under the rubric of "feeling theory,"

postmodernism's seeming resistance to emotion has helped hasten its recent fall from critical favor.<sup>3</sup> From Brian Massumi's dismissive "Fredric Jameson notwithstanding, belief has waned for many, but not affect" (27) to Ann Pellegrini and Jasbir Puar's announcement that "some thirty years after Jameson's first exploration of these questions [of feeling], it is *postmodernism* that has ceased to be sounded as a term of, and for, critical analysis," theorists of feeling regularly preface "new" work on affect and emotion with a ritual vanquishing of the "old" postmodern (36).<sup>4</sup>

It is not hard to grasp why scholars might construe the turn to affect and emotion as a turn away from a postmodernism now judged both chronologically over and critically moribund. Still under the scholarly sway of a long-dominant "cognitive-appraisal" paradigm—in which the blushes, throbs, and pulsations of emotion are imputed to a subject's hermeneutic judgment or interpretation of an object—our accepted account of emotion is singularly out of step with postmodernism's destabilization of hermeneutic depth.<sup>5</sup> Admittedly, many critics identified with the study of feeling have subjected the cognitive-appraisal model of emotion to sustained critique. For these critics, the priority that cognitive-appraisal theory accords depth interpretation elides forms of feeling that escape what Massumi calls the "capture," "closure" (35), and "mastery" of "sociolinguistic meaning" (17, 31).<sup>6</sup> Yet for most scholars this critique compels less a reassessment of emotion than a turn to affect—a mobile, organic, nonsubjective, and noninterpretative mode of feeling that acquired significant theoretical clout in the wake of work by Massumi and Sedgwick. With the notable exceptions of Rei Terada, who offers a radically nonsubjective model of emotion, and Sianne Ngai, who troubles the distinction between emotion and affect (25–29), scholars in feeling theory have tended to conscript *affect* as their primary terminological vehicle in efforts to rethink feeling's relation to individual

and collective life,<sup>7</sup> evoking emotion only as affect's fusty theoretical foil.<sup>8</sup> Whether by default or by deliberation, then, emotion continues to bear the conceptual impress of the cognitive-appraisal paradigm, with its signature stress on emotion's relation to judgment or evaluation.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, it should come as no surprise that while a number of scholars have found a place in postmodern aesthetics and theory for a mobile, surface-oriented affect, squaring postmodernism's challenge to hermeneutic depth with the depth-dependent phenomenon still denoted by "emotion" seems a hopeless cause.

But are *postmodernism* and *emotion* really incompatible? And if not, how might the reconciliation of these two marginalized terms force us to reappraise them? In answering these questions, I want to return to *Crash*'s arresting finale. For closer scrutiny of this scene invites a modification of the critical consensus regarding the film's literal, hermeneutical, and emotional flatness—and thus, I will argue, a modification of orthodox understandings of emotion and postmodernism. This is not to deny that the film's parting image, the eerie triumvirate of husband, wife, and car, is wholly bereft of the hermeneutic

depth that Jameson ascribes to the modernist text. Rather, it is to suggest that the image's lack of depth is so richly embellished by texture that *flatness*, with its connotations of matteness, evenness, and dullness, and *depthlessness*, with its negative specification of the surface as absence of depth, seem spectacularly inadequate to convey the unusual character of the film. The final low-angle shot that sets the lacquered metal of the overturned car's still-untarnished hood against the grisly, tenderized flesh of Catherine's bloodied body (fig. 1) is exemplary here. While resistant to an interpretation that would promise to plumb its symbolic or psychological depths, the image's riot of texture equally precludes an interpretation that would reduce it to mere surface lack.

Hardly isolated to *Crash*'s final, climactic scene, this kind of textural play is routine in a film in which narrative and character development are less subordinate to than strategically confounded with the loving delineation of bruises, scars, and gleaming metal. It is the film's glossy luster that first claims the viewer's attention, as the opening titles' glistening chrome font emerges out of a vanishing point into the glare of a light beam simulat-



FIG. 1

Frame from David  
Cronenberg's  
*Crash* (1996).



ing oncoming headlights, and this slickly airbrushed aesthetic is quickly established as the salient feature of the film's set design, stamping everything from the sleek bent steel of the Ballards' Marcel Breuer dining set to the waxy buff of the hospital linoleum. Yet if *Crash* is a film captivated by the high polish of the glossy surface, it is at least as fascinated by its opposite: the rough, the broken, the bruised, and the fractured. The film's preoccupation with, say, the spiderwebbed glass of a shattered windshield or the vulva-like scar worming its way down the back of Gabrielle's (Roseanna Arquette's) thigh, makes the question of texture in assessing the film as seemingly pressing as it has been critically elided. Indeed, above and beyond its immediate spectacular power, the rough surface exerts a slower-burning narrative power across a film whose plot is animated primarily by the characters' efforts to secure Vaughan's vaunted but elusive "intensity of experience" by fragmenting, piercing, or generally manhandling key pieces of pro-filmic furniture. Admittedly, texture's profile in modernist aesthetics and philosophy precludes its identification as an exclusively postmodern phenomenon. Yet postmodernism's glossy and rough surfaces seem phenomenologically distinct from their modernist counterparts. In its second-hand, reflected gleam, postmodern gloss maps most effectively not onto the live body of a charismatic celebrity—as in the modernist "shine" or "incandescen[ce]" that Anne Anlin Cheng attributes to the fetishized bodily surfaces of the iconic modern "race beauties" Josephine Baker and Anna May Wong (1022, 1024, 1024)—but onto the inhuman, sterile, and mass-produced objects of what Sonya Shannon has called postmodernity's "Chrome Age," an age that finds its metonymic acme in the lustrous, mirrory magnetism of the car. Like its glossier surfaces, however, *Crash*'s ragged flesh wounds and planes of pulverized metal have little in common with their modernist analogues. Whereas the creased and

tattered peasant shoes that Martin Heidegger celebrates in "The Origin of the Work of Art" remain untouched by the gleaming industrial dystopia they are set up rhetorically against, a tear in the steely polish of a car's side panel is inseparable from the glossy finish it disrupts.

All subtleties aside, though, the point to be telegraphed here is that if postmodern aesthetics is conventionally coded as "flat" or "depthless," in *Crash* this flatness is cross-hatched by an almost entirely untheorized textural rubric, which counters a dominant model of surface as lack—lack of depth, lack of meaning, and lack of emotion—with a model of surface as variegated, complex plane. But what are the consequences of this peculiar profusion of texture for postmodernism and emotion? From Nigel Thrift's celebration of "the little, the messy and the jerry-rigged" (197) to Ann Cvetkovich's paean to "the textures of everyday experience" (*Archive*), recent work in feeling theory has afforded "texture" an unmistakable, if largely untheorized, critical pedigree that is best accounted for by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's contention that "a peculiar intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions" (17). As feeling theory's methodological watchword, specifying both the critical scale (close and detailed) and the critical mode (tactile and embodied) most congenial to grasping the affective specificity of a text (Sedgwick 13–17), texture has come to index the field's transcendence of older forms of postmodern analysis that ostensibly disregard affect and emotion. In this light, the prominence of textural tropes in a paradigmatically postmodern text like *Crash* tends to problematize texture's designation as the definitive switch point between a postmodern past and a feeling-oriented present. Given the tight critical fit between texture and emotion, in fact, it should come as no surprise that the film's texture-laden denouement is no more emotionally flat than it is physically flat. *Crash*'s critical reception records the fascination the film exerted over its viewers,

from Mark Browning's "mesmeriz[ed] fascination" (145) to Janet Maslin's "grim fascination" and Robin Dougherty's account of the film as "pleasantly hypnotic," and the strange synthesis of fixity and animation, stasis and excitement, that marks this critical response is anticipated in James's own behavior. While wholly surface-oriented—to the extent that he seems to observe little distinction between the body of the smashed car and the body of his wounded wife—James's connoisseur-like absorption in the wreckage is at odds with the principle of postmodern emotionlessness, and as he runs his fingers over the car's jagged doorframe and dabs at the florid bruises on his wife's leg, it is clear that if he cannot "feel" in any traditional sense, he is also unable to look away. Looked at as "flat," postmodernism's depthless, metallic landscapes seem wholly impervious to emotion; looked at as "textured," however, these same depthless, metallic landscapes turn up a wealth of emotional possibility.

In what follows, I will argue that *Crash*'s eclectic patchwork of rough and glossy surfaces challenges us to thoroughly reassess both postmodernism and emotion. Yet while this essay will primarily pursue this argument through a close reading of *Crash*, Cronenberg's cinematic tribute to the tickle and titillation of postmodern texture cannot be interpreted in isolation. Rather, the film's engagement with texture must be understood as a rejoinder to the strategic *disengagement* from texture that marks postmodern theory, whose frequent if unsystematic recourse to textural tropes is matched only by its efforts to quash texture's unsettling hermeneutic and emotional implications. This essay, then, will briefly chronicle texture's equivocal critical career in postmodern theory before returning to *Crash* to stake out two key lines of argument. First, recalling Sedgwick's observation about the "peculiar intimacy . . . between textures and emotions," I will argue that the film's preoccupation with scarred flesh and

high-gloss metal confounds orthodox understandings of postmodernism's emotional life that cross-implicate hermeneutic and emotional flatness. Recoding postmodernism's notoriously flat or depthless surface as a richly textured plane, *Crash* brokers a distinctively postmodern emotional logic in which a hostility to cognitive-appraisal forms of emotion goes hand in glove with a receptivity to a more idiosyncratic emotional mode. In this sense, far from frostily emotion-free, postmodern aesthetics is ripe with emotional possibility. Yet, as this suggests—and as this essay will contend—the same critical affordances that allow postmodern texture to shake up sedimented models of postmodernism may also allow it to enrich our understanding of emotion. The unique, triangulated emotions yielded by an analysis of *Crash*'s rough and glossy surfaces, in fact, may enable us to salvage emotion from the cognitive-appraisal paradigm—and thus from its status as the dreary, pedestrian cousin of a mobile, noninterpretative, and nonsubjective affect.

### Texture in Theory

Postmodern theory's reappraisal of the hermeneutic opposition surface/depth is encoded in a vividly textural vernacular that—running a reckless gamut from the glossy, shiny, and gleaming to the fractured, broken, and punctured—is as untheorized in postmodern theory as it is unremarked in retrospective critical discussions of the field. If the most heavily cited section of Jameson's analysis of Andy Warhol's screen print *Diamond Dust Shoes* (1980), for example, proclaims the picture's "new flatness or depthlessness," a subsidiary section invokes "the glitter of gold dust, the spangling of gilt sand" that attends that flatness (*Postmodernism* 10)—a "glitter" or "spangling" that shimmers with unexplicated significance. Jean Baudrillard, likewise, represents the rise of the simulacra through the trope of encroach-



ing gloss, “the very last traces of marginality excised as if by plastic surgery: new faces, new fingernails, glossy brain-cells” (*America* 110); Andreas Huyssen refers to postmodernism’s “gleaming facades” (128); and Ziauddin Sardar describes its “high-tech gloss” and its “glitzy yuppie euphoria” (146).<sup>12</sup> The question of just what kind of critical weight we should assign this “glossophilia” is formidable enough (Bora 103). Yet postmodern theory’s recurrent reliance on the figure of the glossy, gleaming surface is matched by its repeated recourse to a series of variants on the rough surface—from the “moment of rupture” that, for Joseph P. Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, “mark[s] the birth of postmodernity” (194) to Jameson’s “fragmentation” of subjectivity and cultural forms (*Postmodernism* 26), from Roland Barthes’s “*punctum*” (26) to Baudrillard’s “contusions, scars, mutilations and wounds” (“*Simulacra*” 314).<sup>13</sup>

As my reading of *Crash* will show, the makeshift opposition glossy/rough is rich with phenomenological and conceptual possibilities. Yet postmodern theory has not only failed to tap into these possibilities, it has also tended to restore this opposition to the conceptual embrace of the more conventional opposition surface/depth, by asking the glossy to figure depthlessness and the rough to figure depth. This former gesture, for example, catalyzes the glossy surface’s long-standing lamination to the commodity—a figure that functions bilaterally as both source and symbol of postmodern superficiality. For Jameson, “the cult of the glossy image” constitutes “the ultimate form of the consumption of streamlined commodities” (*Signatures* 85); Angela McRobbie speaks of “the glossy objects provided . . . by consumer capitalism” (40); and Laura Mulvey refers to “the shiny, glossy surface fascination of the screen . . . [that masks] the process of production concealed behind it” (180). Though Baudrillard’s reference to the way commodity culture caters to our “craving for the antique

. . . the rustic, the artisanal, the handmade” reminds us that the actual commodity is rough as often as it is glossy (*Revenge* 36), the commodity’s readiest metonym remains the “seductive sheen” of a burnished metal, a lacquered wood, or a high-gloss plastic (Mulvey 4). Consistently correlating the glossy surface with the superficiality of the commodity, however, postmodern theory has quite as consistently correlated the rough surface with hermeneutic depth. From Jacques Derrida’s “wound” (65) to Baudrillard’s “fragment” (*Intelligence* 209) and Jameson’s professed yearning for “something both more ugly and less proficient or expert, more home-made and awkward” (*Signatures* 85), the rough surface seems the recognized conceptual currency for transacting claims about deep social or linguistic structures—whether *différance*, simulation, or social relations. Rather than concede the extent to which texture’s glossy, grainy particularity imperils conventional conceptions of hermeneutics and emotion, therefore, postmodern theorists prefer to configure the “rough” surface as the site of hermeneutic depth, while dismissing the “glossy” surface as the site of hermeneutic deficiency.

Of greatest significance for our argument here, however, is the extent to which this consensus on the relation between texture and hermeneutics mandates a corresponding consensus on the relation between texture and emotion. Fully licensed by the snug cultural fit of emotion and depth, postmodern theorists routinely, even reflexively, marry the rough surface to genuine emotion and the glossy surface to emotional inauthenticity. This schema informs Barthes’s panegyric to the photographic *punctum*, which, in a miracle of metaphoric efficiency, places the rough, “punctured” surface of the photograph and the state of being moved by that photograph under the semiotic umbrella of one word (42). This same schema subtends Baudrillard’s fetishization of the “gash mark, [the] bruise, [the] scar” as a “vehement answer” to

emotion's disappearance from postmodern life ("Ballard's *Crash*" 315, 316). In both cases, the rough, wounded, or punctured surface is yoked to the kind of emotional directness and dynamism that Philip Fisher ascribes to Western literature's "vehement passions" (35), the classic emotions of grief, rage, fear, and disgust whose form has provided the blueprint for a still-dominant cognitive-appraisal model of emotion.

Indeed, if this schema has seen some postmodern critics claim the rough surface for intense, direct, and dynamic emotion, it has seen others, like Jameson, stake out the glossy surface for a dubious antiemotion: fascination. Long condemned as a "zombie emotion" (Shaviro, "Life" 139),<sup>14</sup> fascination diverges markedly from the norms of cognitive-appraisal theory. Whereas the cognitive-appraisal paradigm takes "the state of being, in one way or another, moved" as one of emotion's necessary conditions (Ngai 91), *Collins English Dictionary* defines to *fascinate* as "to render motionless, as with a fixed stare or by arousing terror or awe" ("Fascinate"); whereas the cognitive-appraisal paradigm represents emotion as the effect of hermeneutic judgment, *fascination* connotes a certain suspension of judgment, as its origin in "the Latin *fascinare*, meaning to bewitch or enchant" suggests (Connor, "Fascination" 9).<sup>15</sup> And it is *fascination's* status as a byword for inauthentic or "zombie" emotion that Jameson exploits in his dystopian evocation of postmodernism's "mesmerizing new aesthetic mode." "Endow[ing] present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage," nostalgia's capacity to "mesmerize" or fascinate is predicated, in Jameson's postmodern imaginary, on the twin deceptions—natural and supernatural—of "distance" and of a "spell," deceptions whose tropological insignia is the figure of the "glossy mirage" (*Postmodernism* 21). In postmodern theory, it seems, while the rough surface delivers genuine emotion, the

glossy surface promotes only fascination's misleading—and ultimately deadening—emotional special effects.

Ironically, then, given its self-proclaimed theoretical radicalism, postmodern theory has given short shrift to texture's implicit injunction that we reassess our assumptions about postmodernism and emotion. From Baudrillard to Barthes to Jameson, postmodern critics have regularly sought to press the rough and the glossy into the service of more traditional hermeneutic and emotional paradigms—condemning the emotional deficits of a glossy surface dismissed as depthless while celebrating the emotional bounty of a rough surface masquerading as modernist depth. In the effort, however, to enfold texture into a more familiar framework in which the depth-surface binary lines up readily with the binary emotional/emotionless, the figure of fascination sticks out—its protean semiotic possibilities resonating far beyond its ambit as an emblem of emotional lack. Its mesmerized origins at odds with the interpretative judgments central to cognitive-appraisal models of emotion and its deadening, spell-binding effects at odds with the physical changes that are meant to accompany cognitive appraisal, fascination will nevertheless become a mainstay of this essay's efforts to reconcile emotion with postmodernism's signature superficiality. Returning to *Crash*, I will argue that while fascination diverges from conventional, cognitive-appraisal models of emotion, the film not only provides persuasive evidence for fascination's status as an emotion but also limns its paradoxical affinity with the same glossy surface that boilerplate models of postmodern aesthetics suggest should rule out emotion altogether.

Fascination's credentials as an emotion in *Crash* are not, at first sight, very promising. Consider the film's opening scene, a thematic and visual set piece in which the crane-mounted camera makes a clinical inventory of the contents of an airplane han-



gar—the glossy, phallic noses, gleaming floats, and streamlined fuselages of a series of light aircraft—before fastening on Catherine’s fascinated face. From a conventional, cognitive-appraisal perspective, the cut to Catherine should inaugurate the film’s shift in focus from the spectacular protocols of the establishing shot to the narrative protocols of character development, from inanimate backdrop to the animation or movement that, while not sufficient for this model of emotion, remains distinctly necessary to it. Yet instead of dramatizing the dynamism of human emotion, Catherine’s fascination with the glossy veneer of the aircraft over which she leans seems to freeze and immobilize her. Faced with the “willed erasure of history” reflected in its mirrory, mass-manufactured finish (Sedgwick 15), Catherine’s eyes are glazed and her face expressionless as she removes one breast from her bra and stimulates its nipple to erection against the cold, frosted metal in a gesture typical of what Iain Sinclair calls the film’s “quiet pornography” (45). Indeed, the stultifying power of fascination quickly finds dramatic and narrative expression with the arrival of a male figure, whose entry into the frame, and then into

Catherine, is greeted with indifference not only by his lover, whose attention remains riveted by the plane’s glossy, pearlescent surface, but also by the film itself. Restricting his portrayal to a pair of polished business shoes and a single, grasping hand, the camera maintains an exclusive focus on the real liaison taking place between Catherine and the nose of the plane, the idiosyncratic two-shot effecting a kind of visual enjambment that conflates the strangely dehumanizing state of fascination with the literally inhuman prop that is its object (fig. 2). So compelling is this conflation, in fact, that critics of the film have tended to attribute the plane’s textural properties to Catherine herself—William Beard, for instance, extols her “mirror-smooth surface,” her “lacquered insentient beauty,” and even her “glossy features” (403, 397, 397).

Yet Catherine’s peculiar paralysis does not necessarily push fascination outside the purview of emotion. While the physical effects of emotion are typically tagged as vigorous and dynamic, there is nothing to say these physical effects cannot operate in an exclusively narcotic, negative register. If submitting to a seeming stranger’s groping and fingering could be expected to prompt any



FIG. 2

Frame from *Crash*.

sentient subject to some kind of reaction, erotic or otherwise, Catherine's silent stupefaction may be read as a token not of a lack of responsiveness to her partner but of the strength of her responsiveness to the glossy surface—prefiguring both Vaughan's paralysis before the heavily lacquered and period-perfect Porsche he will use to re-create James Dean's fatal collision and Ballard's fugue before the glossy silver coupe at the center of a celebrated set piece at a Mercedes-Benz showroom. Fascination, that is, may be an emotion in which we are moved, paradoxically, to stop moving. This near-narcoleptic model of fascination is corroborated in the work of the psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins, who correlates the way we are "passively caught" by fascination to "a cessation of breathing" (187). While substituting a "cessation" of breath for the quickening of breath we traditionally associate with emotion, fascination's physiological effects are no less consequential—which is to say, no less emotional—for that.

Indeed, *Crash*'s first scene proposes an answer to the taxonomic problems opened up not only by fascination's frosty immobility but also by its oddly depthless object. "Defiantly or even invisibly block[ing] or refus[ing]" all "information about how, substantively, historically, materially, it came into being" (Sedgwick 14), the plane's silken, mass-produced surface smugly resists the hermeneutic judgment that sustains conventional, cognitive-appraisal models of emotion—meaning that while fascination's physical paradoxes might be intelligible, its cognitive operation remains opaque. Closer scrutiny of the scene, however, reminds us that this tactile and hermeneutic lack coexists with a certain glistening visual exuberance. Granting little besides its glacial cool to Catherine's touch, the glossy surface is far more generous to her gaze, and the forensic intensity with which she traces the surface's subtle, shifting glow rivals the "predatory glide" (Sinclair 46) with which the cinematographer Peter

Suschitzky's Steadicam close-up ogles Catherine herself. Cycling between hand and eye, between a lack of tactile stimulation and an excess of visual stimulation, Catherine may be unable to move, but she also cannot stop looking, caught in a visuo-tactile game loop that Jameson encapsulates in his evocation of the "gilt" postmodern surface's dual power to "seal . . . the surface . . . and yet continue . . . to glint at us" (*Postmodernism* 10). A sense of how the cognitive machinery powering this strange amalgam of motor diminution and ocular animation works is unexpectedly furnished by Slavoj Žižek, who enlists Jacques Lacan's theory of desire as desire of the other and René Girard's theory of mimetic desire in his contention that "the real object of [our postmodern] fascination . . . is not the displayed scene but the gaze of the naïve other, absorbed, enchanted by it" (114). For Žižek, as for his Gallic booster club, fascination should be traced not to the object itself but to its scintillating promise that for some other it proffers real meaning and emotion. And it is just such a promise that is held out by the glossy surface, whose tactile and hermeneutic lack, yielding neither meaning nor emotion, is offset by its subtle surface gleam, which avers that for someone, somewhere, its emotional bounty is abundantly accessible. Calling to mind Cheng's insistence that "[s]hine mobilizes the interstitiality between sight and feeling, viscosity and textuality" (1034), fascination is a triangulated emotion that recuperates the feeling foreclosed by the failure of hermeneutic depth as an infinitely deferred and constantly glimmering promise whose horizon of possibility is the other.<sup>16</sup> Perfectly calibrated to the glossy surface, this triangulated structure is reflected in the ease with which *fascination's* definition moves from denoting a generalized intransitive condition ("the state of being fascinated") to indexing a particular transitive power ("the state of being fascinating" ["Fascination"]). What fascinates, it seems, is always fascination itself.



The significance of this shimmering, spectral other to sustaining fascination is borne out in the final tableau of the film's opening sexual triptych—a scene that, in transporting Catherine from the ceaseless solicitations of public space to the supposed sanctuary of her and James's private dwelling, only appears to close down fascination's triangulated logic. Beginning with a prolonged close-up shot of James's eyes that establishes him as the source of a presiding gaze, the scene deftly transfigures marital dyad into perverse triad by depicting his disquisition into the details of his wife's earlier sexual encounter:

JAMES. Where were you?

CATHERINE. In the airplane hangar.

JAMES. Did you come?

CATHERINE. No.

Retrofitting the sexual scenario in the aircraft hangar as a performance stage-directed by and aimed at James, the scene casts James as an other whose putative power to take direct sexual pleasure in the shellacked forefront of a light aircraft mediates Catherine's indirect fascination with that surface. Yet this mediation cuts both ways. While the camera maintains its focus on James, the inquiry shifts its focus from wife to husband, as Catherine's question—"What about your camera girl?"—elicits James's confession that, in his own extramarital encounter, he too had failed to "come." As Catherine's cryptic consolation, "maybe the next one, darling, maybe the next one," echoes on the sound track, a long-awaited reverse shot reveals Catherine from James's point of view—a polished, skirt-suited centerfold whose semblance of obliviousness to her husband, as she leans seductively, her back to him, against the balcony of their apartment, is suspended only when she lifts her skirt to expose the curve of one perfectly toned, satiny buttock. Endowing her with precisely the "mirror-smooth surface" needed to make her an object of fas-

cination for James, her posture prompts him to approach Catherine and enter her from behind, as the camera drifts tactfully over her shoulder and into a twilit vista of the asphalt flyover below. If James mediates Catherine's fascination, then, Catherine, in turn, mediates James's. In a series of emotional favors that Sinclair limns as performances "enacted by one partner and directed by the other" (47), each member of the couple contrives to occupy the position of an other who truly, intensely feels. In this light, Catherine's cheerless promise, "maybe the next one, darling, maybe the next one," sounds throughout the film's chrome-plated urban interiors as a pledge peculiarly apposite not just to fascination's status as an eerily triangulated emotion but also to the film's no less triangulated narrative trajectory, which seems to multiply continuously into new couplings and new permutations of mimetic desire.

While often dismissed as frigidly emotion-free, then, postmodernism's signature surfaces are graced by a complex textural grammar that is curiously congenial to emotion. The object of repeated, futile bids by prominent postmodern theorists to claim its grain and gloss for more conventional, depth-oriented models of emotion and hermeneutics, texture's emotional landscape confounds the cartological limits of the cognitive-appraisal program. Whereas cognitive-appraisal theory attributes emotion to hermeneutic interpretation, fascination entails a hermeneutic failure that is only latterly transfigured into feeling through the intercession of an insightful, intensely feeling other; whereas cognitive-appraisal theory identifies emotion with some form of physiological animation or arousal, fascination traffics in the physiological suspension of stilled breath and interrupted movement.

In what follows I seek to widen the reach of this texture-oriented, triangulated model of emotion in postmodern aesthetics by deconstructing our stock account of the "vehement passions" that are ordinarily opposed

to fascination. For most of *Crash*'s critics, the film's narrative charts a shift from an emotional lack exemplified by the stiff, triangulated fascination of the glossy surface, avatar of postmodern superficiality, to an emotional fullness exemplified by the animated, ostensibly untriangulated emotions of the rough or broken surface, emblem of modernist depth. Seamlessly recapitulating postmodern theory, this reading contrasts a mediated, "zombie" fascination to a direct, "vehement" emotion. Yet doubling down on our attention to *Crash*'s formal economy discloses the subtle but insistent pressure the film puts on this opposition. While idiosyncratic in its cognitive structure and bodily effects, fascination provides a paradigm for all the emotions in *Crash*, which share its spectral, triangulated quality. In this sense, *Crash* becomes less a case study in the emotional atrophy of the postmodern surface than a meditation on the singular emotional formations that cluster around the surface's gloss and grain.

### Between the Rough and the Glossy in *Crash*

Superficially, *Crash*'s visual economy seems to heighten the opposition between a zombie-like, inauthentic, triangulated fascination and the vigorous, more direct emotions attaching to the jagged, coarse, or craggy surface. If the film's extended opening sequence is dominated by the hypnotic fascination of the glossy surface, it is the repudiation of this strangely ossified emotion that propels the narrative, as the Ballards seek to locate in crushed metal, shattered glass, and scarred human flesh the emotional immediacy and animation that fascination lacks. The couple's investment in "battered and broken bod[ies]" finds clearest expression in a scene that sees James on the sunny balcony of his apartment after a midnight rendezvous with Vaughan (Botting and Wilson 84). James's afternoon reverie is interrupted by his wife's slightly narcotized whisper in his ear: "my car." A cut to the ga-

rage shows Catherine crouching next to her silver convertible, a dent blighting the otherwise perfectly streamlined panels of its right side. Her question to James—"Could it have been deliberate?"—is immediately answered by the audience, who can draw on its memory of Vaughan's repeated ramming of the side of James's car in the previous scene to infer that this, too, was Vaughan's doing. James, however, chooses to bypass the workings of psychological deduction and to rely, instead, on direct textural experience: pitting the personalized signature of the dent against the depersonalized anonymity of the mass-produced vehicle, he gets his own answer—"It was Vaughan"—by running his hand directly over its uneven surface (fig. 3). What follows, in fact, implies that in addition to its hermeneutic bounty, the simulacral depth of the crumpled surface provides a certain emotional premium: a close-up of James's face appears to radiate just the kind of vigorous, direct, untriangulated emotion that the glossy surfaces of the opening scenes militate against.

Given the film's apparent allegiance to postmodern theory's reactionary hermeneutic and emotional grammar, it seems only natural that both scholarly and journalistic responses to *Crash* should also read like facsimiles of postmodern orthodoxy. On the one hand, the film's (mostly journalistic) detractors foreground the "glossy and neutralized" commodities that furnish its bravura opening sequences (Jameson, *Geopolitical Aesthetic* 180), seconding Jameson in condemning the glossy surface's impoverished emotional and hermeneutic lexicon as a betrayal of psychological and thematic depth.<sup>17</sup> On the other, *Crash*'s (mostly academic) advocates foreground the coarse, fractured surfaces that rise to prominence later in the film, ventriloquizing Barthes's and Baudrillard's visionary odes to the hermeneutic and emotional profundity of the "*punctum*" and the "gash" in a critical chorus that ranges from Botting and Wilson's suggestion that "from being a me-





FIG. 3

Frame from *Crash*.

chanical failure of diminishing returns, sex is transformed by the crash and becomes, again, a liberating experience" (87) to Beard's contention that "the revitalization of the James-Catherine relationship" is "founded . . . on the abjection of crashes and crash-like injuries" (405). Opposite in their judgment of the film and divergent in their professional agendas, these two critical contingents are nevertheless identical in their capitulation to postmodern theory's hermeneutic and emotional credo.

Yet there are fractures in this apparently immaculate critical carapace. For if the calculus that cinches the textural opposition glossy/rough to the hermeneutic opposition surface/depth echoes postmodern edict, it also seems to do little more than transcribe into scholarly or journalistic terminology the sentiments of *Crash*'s characters. When Botting and Wilson observe that *Crash* locates in "the battered and broken body . . . the last remnant of a human erotic imaginary in the face of a fully automated form of desire," the reader is immediately reminded of Vaughan's proclamation—to Ballard, as the two men speed through the night in the derelict, open-topped Lincoln—that "the car crash is a fertilizing rather than a destructive event, mediating

the sexuality of those who have died with an intensity that's impossible in any other form" (84). In fully identifying the film's rhetoric with that of its characters, however, Botting and Wilson leave no space for narrational irony, internal self-difference, or simple performative contradiction—no space, that is, for the "wounds," "*puncta*," or "fragments" that are the formal correlates of the literal rough surfaces that they reify. As this suggests, the widely sanctioned scholarly reading of the film may be rent by contradiction. The analysis of these contradictions, in turn, may help us deconstruct the textural, hermeneutic, and emotional logic of the postmodern theoretical doctrine to which *Crash*'s scholarly commentators appear to subscribe. To exploit these points of contradiction, however, we must shift our critical attention from narrative and character, the level at which texture is described and portrayed, to formal rhetoric, the level at which texture is experienced.

On first blush, *Crash*'s unique cinematic labor seems to corroborate critical dogma on the relation between texture and hermeneutics through a meticulously coordinated series of alignments between the formal and representational registers. Perhaps the most

telling example of this tendency is the film's insistent cross-implication of the glossy surface and the tracking shot—a formal device that, in the oft maligned yet abidingly powerful paradigm of classic film theories of suture, impedes emotional engagement with the story world by converting the camera from a neutral, transparent observer of the scene into an ostentatious “accomplice” or “intruder” (Sinclair 47), arresting the spectator's gaze on the surface of the image (Heath 57). Relying on the “precise silent smoothness” of Suschitzky's tracking shots as the vehicle for its satin-smooth veneers (Beard 395), *Crash* transforms critical assertions about the glossy surface's “superficiality” into formal axioms (Cornea 6). As the camera dollies slowly into the Ballards' bedroom to disclose the couple copulating quietly against the backdrop of their gleaming bedroom set, for example, the different alienation effects we associate with the extended, unattributed tracking shot on the one hand and with the subtle glimmer of the postmodern consumer fetish on the other are consubstantialized.

Insistently identifying the glossy surface with a formal gambit that holds the spectator hostage on the surface of the image, *Crash* no less insistently associates the roughened, fractured surface with a formal device celebrated for its capacity to “suture” the viewer into a spatially and psychologically rounded world: the cut. In keeping with the cool, clinical visual style of the film up to this point, the film's first collision sequence opens with a prolonged pan along the rain-slicked hood of James's car before cutting to an equally sustained shot of James inside it. Yet as James's loss of control of the car propels him inexorably toward the scene's closing tableau of cut-glass stalactites, wounded flesh, and tarnished metal, we transition suddenly to a series of crosscuts between exterior action shots of the car sliding over the wet road and interior over-the-shoulder shots of James attempting to regain control of the wheel. This fusion of

the “cut” of filmic montage to the rough, broken surface is further secured at a figurative level. With an unusual interior view of the crash capturing the exact moment at which the body from the car opposite penetrates James's windshield, the blur of flesh and fabric so completely obscures the view from the camera that the subsequent cut to a view outside the car reads as a sign that the body has pierced not just the glass of the windshield but also the surface of the lens. The implication here is that the car crash had licensed so raw a connection to the object that the camera was forced to seek relief in the distance of an exterior shot. In supposed sync with the provisions of postmodern theory, then, *Crash* not only endows its glossy surfaces with the patina of superficiality that attaches to the tracking shot but also bestows on its rough, broken surfaces the semblance of depth and immediacy that attaches to the cut.

Yet unsurprisingly, perhaps, for a director identified not with cinematic and theoretical orthodoxy but with “censorial apprehension and retribution” (Harpold), Cronenberg ultimately uses *Crash*'s fastidious formal and thematic ecosystem to promote a subtle critique of postmodern theory's proclamations on texture, emotion, and hermeneutics. As Marc Jancovich has shown in his careful re-reading of New Critical rhetoric, New Critical paeans to the perfect confluence of form and content routinely rely on a rubric of “integrity” and “wholeness” whose capacity to connote a certain glossy luster holds even where the form and the content at issue are, to quote Vaughan, as “ragged and dirty” as they are in *Crash*'s many collision scenes (84). In all too faithfully synchronizing its representational and formal registers—that is, in trying to validate through a series of complementary cuts the hermeneutic and emotional profundity of, say, Vaughan's trademark facial scarring—*Crash* does not just foreclose the “fragments,” “puncta,” and “wounds” associated with direct or animated emotion, it actually transfig-



ures itself into a flawless, shimmering object of fascination. Even as its characters extol the epistemic and emotional value of broken skin, torn metal, and shattered glass, *Crash* invites critical reflection on its glamorous celluloid polish. Almost invariably yielding some version of the observation that “for all of its macabre content, Cronenberg’s film is a glossy affair, his car crashes varnished in celluloid” (Crawford) or that “Cronenberg’s *Crash* aspires to a kind of fleshy, abject raggedness, but never quite makes it” (Harpold), reviews of the film were characterized less by the intense, quasi-Deleuzian excitement anticipated by the film’s radical scholarly critics than by a certain “grim fascination” (Maslin). As a text, therefore, *Crash* seems to constitute the same glossy, streamlined postmodern commodity that its characters devote their screen time to fracturing, shattering, or generally roughing up.

But while the film’s perverse predilection for New Critical form precludes the vigorous, direct emotions fetishized by Vaughan and his associates, not every moment in the film displays so decisive a mating of form and content—and nor, for that matter, is every review so deficient in animated, vehement emotion. The scene in the hospital immediately after James’s first accident is exemplary. While the scene’s mise-en-scène abounds with rough, abrasive surfaces, from torn flesh to florid bruising to ladderlike stitching, its cinematography is characterized by the smooth, uniform movement of the panning shot, as the camera glides slowly up the length of James’s mutilated body. For many critics, this hyphenation of rough surface and glossy form thoroughly compromises the raw, bloody force of its characters’ injuries. According to Beard, for example, as “Cronenberg’s camera tracks over and cuts among these injuries with utter serenity . . . it requires every ounce of abjection emanating from James’s wounds to prevent these massive bruises and contusions from being assimilated into the

overpoweringly calm grey and violet design scheme” (39). Yet if, for Beard, the scene’s formal “calm[ness]” and “serenity” substantially weaken the emotional clout of James’s “massive bruises and contusions,” it is, oddly enough, precisely this scene and scenes like it that excited the most intense emotion in the critics, a fact nowhere more evident than in Beard’s own testimony. At the constative level, the passage is a jeremiad against the emotionally impoverishing effect of the tracking shot. At the performative level, however, Beard’s vivid inventory of “injuries . . . wounds . . . massive bruises and contusions” actually indexes the emotion whose foreclosure it bemoans. An analogous performative contradiction underlies an influential article on the film by Barbara Creed, whose passionate parataxis of “sheaths of metal, shards of glass, ripped leather upholstery, blood glistening on a steering wheel, two crash survivors copulating in a car, a man fucking a wound in the leg of a female crash victim, repeated episodes of anal sex” segues irrationally into the reproof that “*Crash* is oddly and unexpectedly detached” (175). While both Beard and Creed condemn the gap between rough content and glossy form on the basis that it undercuts animated, dynamic emotion, the vehemence of their responses to this gap speaks in the unmistakable tongue of the emotion whose foreclosure they deplore.

Yet if Beard’s and Creed’s reviews seem to exemplify the kind of dynamic, direct response forecast by critics like Botting and Wilson, the peculiar provenance of that response forces us to reassess its structural and cognitive coordinates. For in both cases, the catalyst is not the rough surface itself but the suspicion that the putative emotional power of the rough surface is being blunted by the putative emotional deficiency of the film’s glossy form. Beard’s response to “the abjection emanating from James’s wounds,” for example, is triangulated through his conviction that the “utter serenity” of Suschitzky’s

camerawork threatens to absorb them into “the overpoweringly calm grey and violet design scheme,” while Creed’s response to the film’s “sheaths of metal, shards of glass, ripped leather upholstery” depends on what she reads as the cinematography’s incongruous “detach[ment].” These emotionally exorbitant responses to the film’s jagged and torn surfaces rest on the critics’ belief that *Crash*’s glossy formal strategies are emotionally inadequate to a *mise-en-scène* littered with “shards of glass” and “ripped leather upholstery.” Numerous critics have championed the film’s rough, broken, or punctured surfaces as incitements to direct, unmediated emotion. Yet to the extent that our response to James’s grisly flesh wounds depends on their revelation through a series of cool, polished tracking shots that are ostensibly unable to do them justice, that response is no less mediated than the fascination fomented by the dull metallic glow of *Crash*’s saturation-blue lighting on a rain-slicked street.

If fascination and the more recognizably “vehement” passions are homologous in their structure, however, they carry very different semiotic burdens. Whereas the fascination of the glossy surface is actuated by the feeling that someone is experiencing the emotion that I lack, the more vehement emotions of the rough surface are fueled by the feeling that someone is lacking the real, direct emotion that I experience. While both the rough and the glossy, then, participate in emotion’s triangulated structure, fascination conceives the other as the hidden repository of real emotion, whereas the vehement passions conceive the other as the graveyard of emotional lack. This opposition is best exemplified by the different conceptualizations of “traffic” with which the two emotional categories are subliminally associated. In their tentative early forays into Vaughan’s ghoulish “nexus of car crashes and sex” (Beard 380), the Ballards’ fascination with cars prompts them to attribute an inscrutable purpose to automobiles everywhere.

As Helen Remington (Holly Hunter) puts it, describing an experience James excitedly recognizes, “When I left the hospital I had the strange feeling that all these cars were gathering for some reason I didn’t understand . . . there seemed to be ten times as much traffic.” Yet by the final few minutes of the film, James is moved to remark to Catherine as the couple coast down an empty stretch of freeway, “The traffic! Where is everyone? They’ve all gone away. . . .” If the fascination that animated the first section of the film depended on an other charged with a vigorous, empowered sensuality, an other “gathering for some reason I didn’t understand,” the characters’ taste of the raw, animated emotion yielded by the rough surface evokes a deflated, empty other—an other who is, in James’s words, “gone away.” One of the benefits of this argument is its capacity to account for the outraged reception of the film by British and American conservative groups, whose efforts to have *Crash* banned otherwise seem oddly anachronistic in the light of the ubiquity that “perverted acts” and “sexual deviance” enjoyed in mainstream cinema by the mid-1990s (Barker, Arthurs, and Harindranath 1). In view of my analysis, however, these censorship campaigns can be traced not to the film’s content but to the unsettling disparity between the film’s content and its form, between the rough surface and its glossy packaging. After all, this disparity projects a specter that stirs the anxieties plaguing late-twentieth-century Western conservative movements more deeply than mere sex perversion itself—the specter of the evacuated, dehumanized, affectless subject who fails to register sex perversion’s horror.

I opened this essay with a question: “What was postmodernism?” For feeling theory, the answer is a foregone conclusion: postmodernism was a panoply of supine, depthless surfaces, resistant, even hostile, to the emotional formations that now captivate critical and cultural scholarship. Admittedly, many postmodern critics have ratified



this reasoning, reinstating older, modernist paradigms of feeling by splicing the glossy surface to a model of icy, emotionless superficiality and the rough to a model of emotionally charged depth. Yet, as I have shown, neither of these alignments does justice to the specificity of postmodern texture's emotional structure or effect. Attention to the particularities of texture in *Crash* makes it clear that instead of merely retreading the emotional logic of the surface-depth opposition, the rough and the glossy have a unique—and uniquely postmodern—emotional syntax of their own. This is not to say that *Crash* is not hostile to emotions like fear, grief, or pleasure that fall readily into the descriptive ambit of cognitive-appraisal theory. Rather, it is to suggest that *Crash* entertains a distinctive, borderline species of emotion that should prompt us to reconsider our prevailing paradigms for understanding both emotion as a category of feeling and postmodernism as a now historical critical and aesthetic apparatus. As Sedgwick has suggested, “To perceive texture is never only to ask or know What is it like? nor even just How does it impinge on *me*? Textural perception always explores two other questions as well: How did it get that way? and What could I do with it?” (13). Texture, in other words, projects a series of social, discursive, and material worlds, and it is through reference to these worlds that it facilitates feeling. I experience fascination when the glossy surface's hermeneutic and thus emotional bounty magnetizes me with the promise of an other ostensibly possessed of the emotional immediacy I conceive myself as lacking. I feel more direct emotions, conversely, when the coarse, craggy surface's imagined hermeneutic and emotional wealth evokes an other ostensibly lacking the emotional immediacy I conceive myself as possessing.

Revealing the glistening, grainy consistency of a surface often dismissed as an empty, emotionless plane, this essay contends that just as modernism has metamorphosed under

the “fresh eyes and ears” of the “new modernist studies” (Mao and Walkowitz 738, 737), so postmodernism may be ripe for an analogous reassessment. Yet if this analysis has used emotion to revamp our thinking about postmodernism, it has equally used postmodernism to push the envelope of our thinking about emotion. Much current scholarship on feeling reifies affect as a mobile, promiscuous, and liberating entity, while dismissing emotion as a stodgily subjective phenomenon. For most critics in feeling theory, in fact, it is affect—something “irreducibly bodily and autonomic” and “completely free of inherent meaning or association to [its] triggering source”—that is hailed as the theoretical “way forward” (Massumi 36; Gregg and Seigworth 5; Hemmings 550). Yet from the fascination of the glossy surface to the more intense emotions of the rough, the feelings that congregate around postmodern texture make an equally powerful claim for the transformative force of a phenomenon that we can now read less as a thing that a subject “has” than as a gleamingly impossible promise, less as an “old surprise to which we have become more or less accustomed” (Massumi 220–21) than as what Oliver Harris, describing fascination, dubs “an obscure attraction, an experience we can capture only in the process of being captivated” (6). In advancing this argument, my gambit is this: that precisely in its resistance to familiar models of emotion, postmodernism may be a priceless aesthetic and theoretical resource in their reappraisal.

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## NOTES

1. In 2005 Bill Brown argued that far from being “over,” postmodernism had only “just begun.” Without disputing Brown's assessment of “*postmodernism* as a periodizing term” (735), my essay rests on the premise—most clearly articulated by the title of Brian McHale's article “What Was Postmodernism?,” from which I lift my opening question—that the fortunes of postmodernism

as an aesthetic and critical practice are on the wane. This position is substantiated not just by those committed to forms of thinking seemingly incompatible with postmodernism (Bourriaud; Kirby; Lipovetsky 11; Samuels 220) but also by postmodernism's former advocates (Connor, *Introd.* 1; Hutcheon xi; McHale).

2. It was Jameson's perception of this relation that provoked his formulation of a phrase now recited with slogan-like regularity in connection with postmodern thinking: "the waning of affect" (*Postmodernism* 15).

3. I use "feeling theory" here because it encompasses, with a modicum of neutrality, recent work on both "affect" and "emotion."

4. See also McCarthy et al. 274; Probyn 23–25; Woodward 761.

5. For cognitive-appraisal theorists, then, while physiological arousal is a necessary component of emotion, emotions originate in, and are largely classified through reference to, the cognitive interpretation of an object or situation. In this model, emotion is the product of the following sequence: I encounter an event or object, I evaluate its meaning for me, I experience an associated physical arousal. In the absence of interpretation or judgment, a physiological change—say, an eruption of tears—neither qualifies as an emotion nor can be distinguished as pleasant or unpleasant (both ecstasy and anguish, after all, can involve tears). De Sousa; Nussbaum; and Solomon offer key defenses of cognitive-appraisal theory.

6. Cvetkovich ("Everyday Feeling" 5), Gould (22), and Sedgwick (113) critique cognitive-appraisal theory from within feeling theory.

7. Berlant; Grossberg; Massumi; Sedgwick; Thrift.

8. Massumi 35; Shaviro, *Post-cinematic Affect* 3–4; Sedgwick and Frank 18.

9. Berlant 1–32; Grossberg 69–88; Massumi 1–45; Sedgwick and Frank; Thrift 1–26.

10. Buchanan 93; Pellegrini and Puar 37; Shaviro, *Post-cinematic Affect* 4–5.

11. Sedgwick 13–17.

12. For more on the varied cultural deployment of the glossy surface, see J. Brown; Cheng; Thompson.

13. While Roland Barthes's postmodern credentials are not indisputable, critics have identified *Camera Lucida* as part of his late-career "postmodernist turn" (e.g., Herman 39–40).

14. David Harvey argues that postmodernism's "evident fascination with . . . reflecting glass surfaces" effectively "draw[s] a veil over real geography through [the] construction of images and reconstructions, costume dramas, staged ethnic festivals, etc." (88, 87).

15. For more on fascination as a function of the failure of cognitive capacity, see Hume 74–75; Blanchot 32; Adorno 235–38.

16. My account of the fascination of the glossy surface deviates considerably from the account of the glossy's

allure enshrined in the Freudian theory of the fetish. Whereas for Freud the glossy fetish object "ward[s] . . . off" (while unconsciously "memorial[izing]") the realization of the lack of the phallus (206), in my reading the glossy surface fails to ward off our awareness of the lack of intense emotion; rather, the fascinated subject's sense of lack is resolved into emotion only through the intercession of a ghostly, hypothetical other.

17. For more on this see Bellamy and Howard; Barker, Arthurs, and Harindranath 45; Johnson.

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# Zuckerman/Roth: Literary Celebrity between Two Deaths

LOREN GLASS

FOLLOWING IN THE WAKE OF THE 2007 PUBLICATION OF *EXIT GHOST*, the journal *Philip Roth Studies* devoted its entire fall 2009 issue to “mourning Zuckerman.” In the issue’s introduction, Aimee Pozorski attributes her interest in the project to the “Janus-faced temporality associated with mourning” as Freud conceptualizes it in “Mourning and Melancholia.” According to Pozorski, mourning “is always looking back—back to that which is lost in the past—but also it looks forward to anticipate . . . a loss that is yet to come” (“Mourning” 155). While Pozorski does not specify the loss anticipated by the mourning enacted in the issue, it is not a stretch to infer that Nathan Zuckerman’s valedictory disappearance presages Philip Roth’s own death, that the sustained association between author and avatar in this case is such that *Exit Ghost* functions as a kind of surrogate suicide, after which Roth, the biographical author, becomes a specter suspended between two deaths.

Of course, as all Rothians know, Nathan Zuckerman is himself suspended between two deaths, having died already in *The Counterlife* (1986), a book that critics agree marks a turning point in Roth’s prolific career. By having Zuckerman die on the operating table in the fourth chapter of that book, Roth is able to dwell directly on the transformation death can effect in the perception and reception of an author’s work. As Miriam Jaffe-Foger notes in the eulogy that concludes the special issue, the “problem of posthumous representation haunted Zuckerman” (282), but I would modify this statement slightly and say that the problem of posthumous *reputation* haunted Zuckerman and his creator or, rather, generated the need for such an avatar in the first place. None of the essays in this special issue, and no book on Philip Roth, fully accounts for the necessity of Nathan Zuckerman in Roth’s career. Either Zuckerman is assimilated into the cast of authorial

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doubles—from Neil Klugman to David Kepesh to Philip Roth himself—who populate Roth's fiction and provide him with a platform to explore the problem of the self, or he is subordinated to any number of thematic preoccupations—from the fall of Newark to the legacy of the Holocaust—that recur in Roth's oeuvre.<sup>1</sup>

This is surprising, since Nathan Zuckerman is surely Philip Roth's most significant creation. He is a creation without precedent; though many writers, from George Eliot to Mark Twain to Stephen King, have adopted pseudonyms or invented avatars, no one has sustained what is, in effect, a parallel persona whose life and work reflect and refract the entire literary career of the persona's creator. And yet, while Nathan Zuckerman is exceptional, he is also representative, insofar as his creation is a response to a contradiction that confronts any author who aspires for lasting literary consecration in a culture industry focused on contemporaneous acclaim.

Such consecration has always been Philip Roth's ambition, and Nathan Zuckerman, I will argue, was conceived as a way of managing the conflict between the gradual and ultimately posthumous fame associated with his modernist forebears and the instantaneous, contemporaneous celebrity that characterized his own postmodern career. These two temporalities of recognition correspond to what Pierre Bourdieu calls the "sub-field of restricted production" and the "sub-field of general production," the former constituted by the slow accretion of a reputation among a discrete audience of the avant-garde and the latter constituted by the rapid achievement of popularity with a mass audience (*Field* 53). During the modern era, these fields and the temporalities and economies that constituted them remained largely distinct, and most modernist authors achieved recognition in the restricted subfield before becoming known in the general subfield. By the postwar era, in which Roth began his career, the two fields increasingly overlapped and interpenetrated,

such that critical canonization and mass popularity could coincide. Nathan Zuckerman enabled Philip Roth to negotiate this coincidence and manage its attendant contradictions.

As Pozorski affirms in her introduction to the recent collection *Roth and Celebrity*, "scholars of Roth and of celebrity have explored Roth's privileged position and insight into the condition of celebrity far less than seems warranted" (4). Building on Joe Moran's insights in *Star Authors* (2000), which posits all Roth's authorial alter egos as "hypothetical selves" designed to deal with the consequences of his post-*Portnoy* celebrity (103), *Roth and Celebrity* works to remedy this neglect, and a number of essays in that volume, especially Jaffe-Foger's "Philip Roth: Death and Celebrity," have contributed to my thinking on this topic. However, no essay in the volume is devoted exclusively to Zuckerman, though the series *Zuckerman Bound* is acknowledged throughout as central to any consideration of the topic.<sup>2</sup>

If *Roth and Celebrity* fails to fully account for Nathan Zuckerman, it is also true that, with the exception of Moran, scholars of literary celebrity have neglected Roth. Since the publication of John Cawelti's foundational (if frequently overlooked) essay "The Writer as Celebrity," authorial celebrity in literary history has undergone considerable scholarly scrutiny, involving individual writers ranging from Byron to Twain to Stein to Mailer and historical eras ranging from the Romantic to the postmodern, but Roth has played a minor role in this scholarship. Indeed, in my contribution to this growing subfield of literary studies, *Authors Inc.: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880–1980* (2004), I conclude with the premature prophecy that "literary celebrity . . . persists only as a residual model of authorship. It no longer commands the cultural authority it did in the modern era; and it never will again" (200), effectively placing Roth outside the historical coordinates of my argument. My conclud-



ing claim resonates with the introduction to the recent *PMLA* issue devoted to “celebrity, fame, notoriety,” whose authors argue that “[i]n the twenty-first century, the immortality of traditional fame has taken a back seat to the incandescence of celebrity” (Boone and Vickers 904), thereby affirming that the kinds of acclaim conventionally associated with literary achievement are, indeed, residual. And yet Leo Braudy’s contribution to that issue notes that “it’s worth trying to keep fame and celebrity distinguished if not separated, for it could be argued that it is exactly the rise of celebrity that helps engender some of the more interesting efforts at fame” (“Knowing” 1072). Nathan Zuckerman, as both an exceptional and a representative figure of postmodern authorship, is surely one of those efforts.

To clarify how Zuckerman can be both exceptional and representative, I will recapitulate the history of the contradictions his creation is intended to resolve. As the coordinators of the *PMLA* special issue emphasize at the outset, “Celebrity has a history” (Boone and Vickers 906), and the most comprehensive and compelling history of it remains Braudy’s *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, which usefully places literary and artistic fame in a broader historical context. Braudy details how the idea of the artist as an exceptional individual was conceived in the early modern era in deliberate contrast to the more worldly models of renown based on political and military achievement. Thus, he claims that “the effort to reserve ‘art’ and especially ‘artist’ for a more rarified sense of making is comparable to our current urge to distinguish fame from celebrity” (281). The “timelessness” of literary creation, then, is a historical response to competing models of recognition based on more worldly achievements.

The more direct antecedents of the reputational dynamics determining Roth’s career emerge in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, in the genesis of an autonomous literary field meticulously documented

by Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (1992). As Braudy affirms, it is in this bohemian milieu that we see “the first large-scale effort to supplement or even replace the traditionally tangible sources of fame with a fame of the human spirit struggling against a hostile or indifferent society.” This effort generated what Braudy describes as a “cult of failure in the present to ensure celebration in the future” (*Frenzy* 485, 488) and what Bourdieu theorizes as the “economic world reversed” that has defined art since the nineteenth century (*Field* 29). Subsequently, economic value and cultural value have tended to be conceptually opposed, and failure to earn the former, even under a postmodern dispensation, continues to signify success in earning the latter for those aspiring to traditional models of literary and aesthetic consecration.

These rules of art have posed acute challenges for American authors and artists. As I have argued elsewhere, in the modern United States “many authors whose self-understanding was based in European models of restricted production found themselves having to adapt to the marketing strategies and audience sensibilities of large-scale production” (6). And, as Braudy confirms, a representative figure in this regard is Ernest Hemingway, who “remains the prime case of someone fatally caught between his genius and its publicity” (*Frenzy* 547). And Hemingway provides an important precedent for Roth, by exemplifying what Cawelti deems “the most interesting twentieth-century development in the relationship between celebrity and literature,” which is “the use by a number of major writers of their celebrity personas as an integral part of their art” (171). This development, insofar as it forces the writer to engage the problem of posthumous reputation, tends to provoke a preoccupation with death. Braudy writes, “[W]henever a writer creates a hero whose nature is like his own . . . the themes of fame and death are closely related” (*Frenzy* 28).<sup>3</sup>

Citing Braudy's history, as well as Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*, Moran's *Star Authors*, and my *Authors Inc.*, Faye Hammill notes that the "history of literary celebrity has been rendered in strikingly male terms" (13). Hammill establishes that recent attention to famous women writers has mandated a complication of Bourdieu's categories, specifically a "recuperation" of the middlebrow as a key location in which literary celebrity has been negotiated, frequently in ways that have resulted in the neglect of women writers who were celebrated during their lifetimes. And as Brenda Weber confirms in *Women and Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), attention to these women writers necessitates scrutinizing the terminology of renown. Thus, she points out that in Braudy's nomenclature

[f]ame stands for the high, celebrity for the low. Fame marks aspiration; celebrity brands ambition. Fame indicates valor; celebrity stains scandal. And, since the machinery of fame is often the elite masculinist theater of politics, war, and heroism, whereas the workings of celebrity often engage the feminized domains of rumor and innuendo, the divide between fame and celebrity clearly conveys both class and gendered distinctions.

Weber's response to this terminological tradition is to "deliberately move back and forth between the terms fame and celebrity so as to problematize the gender bias that stands at the heart of the fame/celebrity distinction" (18).

Since Roth was himself invested in this distinction, I have found it useful to maintain it, but in a schematically specific way that illuminates his career, including its gender dynamics, and accounts for some of the more interesting consequences of the increasingly complex interpenetration of the fields from which the distinction initially emerged. In the discussion that follows, I define fame as posthumous and celebrity as contemporaneous; when they are formulated in this way, their

cultural interpenetration can be understood in terms of Slavoj Žižek's concept of being "between two deaths." According to Žižek, the difference between two deaths is "the difference between real (biological) death and its symbolization, the 'settling of accounts,' the accomplishment of symbolic destiny." He elaborates that "this gap can be filled in various ways; it can contain either sublime beauty or fearsome monsters" (*Sublime Object* 135). His two illustrations (derived from Jacques Lacan's *Seminar VII*, on "the ethics of psychoanalysis") are Antigone, whose symbolic death precedes her biological death, and the ghost of Hamlet's father, whose biological death precedes his symbolic death.<sup>4</sup>

Ghosts make up something of a leitmotif in the Zuckerman cycle, which is bookended by titles that use the word *ghost*. In *The Ghost Writer* (1979), Zuckerman is haunted by the specter of Anne Frank, whom Roth places in an Antigone-like position by imagining that she did not really die. In *Exit Ghost*, Zuckerman gets to play the ghost of Hamlet's father, reminding us of the sins we seem unable to expiate. The first ghost is an object of desire; Zuckerman desires Amy Bellette, and, as we shall see, this desire motivates him to envision her as Anne Frank. The second ghost is the subject of a drive; Zuckerman, now impotent and incontinent, has become a bodiless teller of tales that illustrate what is rotten in our lives.<sup>5</sup>

In *Looking Awry*, Žižek explains how the space between two deaths divides desire from drive, specifying that "apparitions that emerge in the domain 'between two deaths' address to us some unconditional demand, and it is for this reason that they incarnate pure drive without desire" (21). This decoupling of drive from desire clarifies why Roth felt it necessary to kill Zuckerman after the conclusion of the first trilogy, which is dominated by desire, allowing him to live on as a sort of pure narrative drive. The split also illuminates the contrast in ethical orientation



between the two trilogies, the first of which focuses on the resolutely masculine amorality of the narcissistic author figure and the second of which calls out the entire culture for its moral hypocrisy.<sup>6</sup>

In brief, the mass cultural celebrity precipitated by *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), followed by the devastating attack on that text and its author by Irving Howe in *Commentary*, provoked Roth to reconsider and re-create his career on the model of his literary forebears—James, Flaubert, Proust, Malamud, Mann, and especially Kafka, who died young after having published little. *Zuckerman Bound*, the three novels and epilogue that constitute the first Zuckerman cycle, effectively absorbs the charismatic powers of these ancestors. Then Roth kills and resurrects his avatar, enabling himself to write his American trilogy (*American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*) from a posthumous perspective, between two deaths. Roth solved the problem of the contradiction between contemporaneous celebrity and posthumous fame by, in effect, trumping time, first rehearsing a career in the former mode, in which celebrity ultimately leads to failure and death, and then living on, between two deaths, in the latter mode, a legend before his time, still writing.

### The Problem with Portnoy

Unlike his modernist forebears, most of whom spent long apprenticeships laboring in obscurity before garnering recognition, Roth gained renown and notoriety early. Celebrity, in other words, was not only the consequence of *Portnoy's Complaint* but also one of the underappreciated contexts for its conception. As Roth confirms in the author's note to *Reading Myself and Others* (1975), "Because recognition—and with it, opposition—came to me almost immediately, I seem (from the evidence here) to have felt called upon to assert a literary position and to defend my moral flank"

(viii). Many of the pieces in that volume reflect not only on the causes and consequences of Roth's own celebrity but also on the moral stakes of the larger celebrity culture to which he was forced to accommodate himself.

*Portnoy's Complaint* was partly a response to the former, insofar as Roth decided to create the character that he imagined his Jewish audience imagined him to be. But it was also a way to process the latter; as Roth recounts in "How Did You Come to Write That Book, Anyway?" a source of inspiration for the novel was a "longish monologue" he began writing in the late sixties, to be accompanied by a slide show consisting in "full-color enlargements of the private parts, fore and aft, of the famous." While working on this "unfinished," indeed "unpublishable," piece, he found himself able to "go on at some length about the solitary activity that is so difficult to talk about and yet so near at hand" (*Reading* 31–32). Roth found a way to write about male masturbation, the act for which Portnoy and Roth himself would become celebrities, through writing about the "private parts" of public people. Portnoy's persona, which would become the basis of Roth's celebrity in the seventies, emerges from these masturbatory fantasies about celebrities, fantasies that anticipate the increasingly explicit attention to the intimate sex lives of famous people in the decades after the sexual revolution. And it is a persona dominated by a psychoanalytically determined conception of desire, by Roth's classical, indeed clichéd, understanding, partly informed by his psychoanalysis in the sixties, of the struggle between the id and the superego.

It is over and against these fantasies, fantasies "which purported to enlarge and examine upon an illuminated screen the sexual parts of *others*," that Roth began to write "a strongly autobiographical piece" based on his Jewish upbringing in postwar Newark, a piece for which his working title was "Portrait of the Artist." Roth frames the juxtaposition between these exercises in terms of literary

genre ("the extremes of unmanageable fable or fantasy and familiar surface realism or documentation") and character type ("the Jewboy and the nice Jewish boy" [33]). But the two pieces also model different modes of recognition and reputation, one based on contemporaneous visual exposure by others and one based on retrospective verbal narration by the self. It is the cultural and temporal clash between these modes that generated the need for a figure like Nathan Zuckerman.

### The Death of Desire and the Desire for Death

*Portnoy's Complaint* was no *Portrait of the Artist*, though many confused author with protagonist, and indeed *Portnoy's* purported lack of artistry would be the basis of Howe's accusation that Roth's work suffers from "a thin personal culture" (73). In his contribution to the special issue of *Philip Roth Studies*, R. Clifton Spargo argues that we should see "the invention of the alter ego Nathan Zuckerman at least in part as a response to the criticisms of Irving Howe" (253), and David Gooblar has affirmed, more specifically, that we can understand Roth's engagement with Franz Kafka and Anne Frank in *The Ghost Writer* as "part of the 'personal culture' that Irving Howe claimed Roth was lacking" (87). *The Ghost Writer* has been widely, and legitimately, understood as marking Roth's serious engagement with his modernist forebears, including not only Kafka but also Joyce, James, Mann, and the fictional E. I. Lonoff, whose ascetic refusal of all public attention comes to symbolize the modernist dismissal of celebrity.<sup>7</sup>

Kafka makes perfect sense in this respect. As someone who died before any of his major work was published, he presents the ideal model of an ascetic life followed by posthumous fame, which is impossible for Zuckerman (already an "unchaste monk") to emulate (Roth, *Ghost Writer* 7). Desire is immediately posed as a reputational issue in *The Ghost Writer*, as Zuckerman guiltily remem-

bers looking at his picture in the *Saturday Review* and "thinking that this photograph of an intense and serious young writer . . . said to be living in a five-flight Village walk-up with a young ballerina, might inspire any number of thrilling women to want to try to take her place" (38). Though he idealizes Lonoff and will eventually become like him in the later trilogy, the young Zuckerman is loath to live the ascetic life of the modernist artist; instead, he relishes the degree to which his reputation might enhance his sex life.

His immediate love interest in *The Ghost Writer* is Lonoff's mysterious assistant Amy Bellette, whom Zuckerman imagines to be Anne Frank and whose role in this text, and *Zuckerman Bound* as a whole, has been the subject of considerable critical attention, most of it understandably focusing on how she allows Roth to engage the issue of the Holocaust and its (mis)representation in postwar American popular culture (e.g., Pinsker; Van Oostrum; Spargo). However, critics have also noted the degree to which she functions as an authorial double for Zuckerman, a female complement to Kafka. As Gooblar sums up, "Zuckerman has imagined Anne Frank to be his double, a Jewish writer much like himself" (80).

What Franz Kafka and Anne Frank reveal to Zuckerman is the crucial role that death can play in the negotiation of literary reputations. Roth had already illustrated this importance for Kafka in his brief jeu d'esprit "I Always Wanted You to Admire My Fast-ing," in which he imagines the author living on in obscurity as a Hebrew teacher in Newark, indirectly establishing the degree to which Kafka's death precipitated his canonization (*Reading* 223-44). But the relationship is scrutinized in more detail and complexity in the "Femme Fatale" chapter of *The Ghost Writer*, when Zuckerman imagines Bellette as Anne Frank coming to the conclusion that her literary reputation depends on her death. After going to see the "dramatiza-



tion of Anne Frank's *Diary*" in New York, she realizes that she has "to be dead to everyone" (124). In deciding to stay Amy Bellette, she illustrates how important authorial death can be to the establishment of literary reputation. As Roth explains:

Were *Het Achterhuis* known to be the work of a living writer, it would never be more than it was: a young teenager's diary of her trying years in hiding during the German occupation of Holland, something boys and girls could read in bed at night along with the adventures of the Swiss Family Robinson. But dead she had something more to offer than amusement for ages 10–15; dead she had written, without meaning to or trying to, a book with the force of a masterpiece. (145–46)

Dead, she is able to claim that "of all the Jewish writers, from Franz Kafka to E. I. Lonoff, she was the most famous" (152). Anne Frank, then, is not only a model of the Jewish writer for Zuckerman, she is also an example of posthumous canonization, an author to whom fame came after (and because of) death.

Franz Kafka and Anne Frank, then, model a version of posthumous reputation that is unavailable to Nathan Zuckerman, or to Philip Roth, and the comic complexity of becoming famous while still alive would be the thematic focus of *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), the Zuckerman text that focuses most explicitly on the consequences of *Portnoy's Complaint* (renamed *Carnofsky* in the Zuckerman books). The figure that embodies these consequences is the manic fan Alvin Pepler, who, like many readers of *Portnoy's Complaint*, confuses author with protagonist. Pepler functions in this text as a readerly double, providing a mechanism whereby Roth can incorporate and respond to his audience's (mis)readings of his work, creating a dialectical feedback loop that, as Mark McGurl affirms, has contributed to Roth's productivity (51–56).

Pepler is, or rather was, also a celebrity, and his renown as a game-show prodigy

(based on that of Herbert Stempel, a figure in the quiz-show scandals) further illuminates the contrast between posthumous and contemporaneous renown. Pepler's celebrity, significantly based on his "photographic memory," is evanescent and televisual, in contrast with the established literary reputations of the great modernist authors—from Flaubert to Proust—who are repeatedly cited in the narrative (19). Thus, when Pepler claims, "You're our Marcel Proust, Mr. Zuckerman" (13), the irony is generated not so much by the inaptness of the comparison as by the fact that it is made by a self-proclaimed "man of the people" while Zuckerman is still alive. As Zuckerman anxiously notes, "When the lion comes up to Hemingway with his review of 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,' time to leave the jungle for home" (148). Pepler's proximity to Zuckerman violates the temporal and spatial distance presumed to exist between modernist authors and contemporary readers, particularly in the postwar era when the authors were dead and the readers were American college students; the extended conversations and contretemps between Zuckerman and Pepler, then, allow Roth to probe the incommensurability between the reputational temporalities that bring them together.

This temporal incommensurability leads Zuckerman to fantasize that Pepler is going to kill him, an act that would resolve the contradiction through rendering Zuckerman's fame posthumous. And it is additionally significant that this fantasy is routed back through the original onanistic reveries that spawned *Portnoy's Complaint*. Thus, Zuckerman imagines the headlines that will appear the day after his assassination: "JERK-OFF ARTIST KILLS BARD OF JERKING-OFF; ZUCKERMAN DEAD BY ONANIST'S HAND" (215). As the circularity of this headline indicates, contemporaneous celebrity collapses author into audience, thereby making it impossible, in the end, to differentiate assassination from suicide. Indeed, Zuckerman's fear of the former in this

text hardly masks a persistent desire for the latter; both of them would comfortably place him in a posthumous position more appropriate to his literary aspirations.

*Zuckerman Unbound* also provides a platform for Roth to consider the contrast between masculine and feminine experiences of renown, a contrast that, as we have seen, maps onto the distinction between fame and celebrity and that is again leveraged by way of the figure of Anne Frank. However, in this text Frank figures not as an author but as a role, the theatrical debut of Caesara O'Shea, the "sex symbol" with whom Zuckerman has become associated in the gossip columns and whom he dates, and beds, in the middle of the narrative. In O'Shea's drawing room Zuckerman finds a copy of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Crisis in the Life of the Actress*. With O'Shea in the backseat of her limo, he reads that a famous actress "knows that her name is on everyone's lips, even when they wipe their mouths with their handkerchiefs!" Imagining that the lines are about O'Shea and luxuriating in his luck in having had sex with her, Zuckerman wipes his own mouth in giddy self-congratulation. O'Shea's fame is based on her desirability, on her embodiment, as Kierkegaard specifies, of "feminine youthfulness" (97, 96).<sup>8</sup> This physical desirability, which inevitably fades with age, contrasts with the temporality of literary reputations, which are supposed to increase with age, only reaching full maturity after the death of the author. The perversity of collapsing these types of celebrity into each other is symptomatized by the "damp matted handkerchief," steeped in the "stale acrid odor" of semen, that Zuckerman receives, purportedly from Pepler, in the mail (176).

If *Zuckerman Unbound* engages the problem of Roth's populist apotheosis, of his realization that "all one's readers, it turned out, weren't New Critics sitting on their cans at Kenyon," *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) engages, and effectively dispenses with, the New York

intellectual tastemakers whose approval he had initially sought and received (*Reading* 78). As Spargo affirms, in this text "Zuckerman is a stand-in for a quarrel with Howe that might have unfolded, had Roth not refused to take it up in a non-fictional context" (269). Thus, in the fictional context of *The Anatomy Lesson* we are informed that "Milton Appel had unleashed an attack upon Zuckerman's career that made Macduff's assault upon Macbeth look almost lackadaisical" (68).

Roth then has Zuckerman refashion Milton Appel the critic as Milton Appel the publisher of the magazine *Lickety Split*, which "is not a mass-distribution publication because it's too dirty" (173). Zuckerman's hilarious and increasingly addled impersonation of Appel over the course of the second half of the novel, based partly on Roth's impressions of Al Goldstein, the editor of *Screw* magazine, serves not only to denigrate Howe, and therefore to dismiss his residual authority as an arbiter of reputations, but also to illustrate how Zuckerman's post-*Carnofksy* renown "wasn't literary fame, it was sexual fame, and sexual fame stinks" (207). *The Anatomy Lesson* illustrates how the stink of sexual fame depends on the living, suffering, desiring body of the author, which has now, inevitably, exhausted itself as a source of literary productivity. Roth laments, "Zuckerman had lost his subject. His health, his hair, and his subject" (39).

Zuckerman's sexual fame correlates to the feminized experience of celebrity as it is anatomized in *Zuckerman Unbound*, confirming that, under a postmodern dispensation, male public figures, including writers, are increasingly subjected to the types of spectacular display conventionally associated with feminine desirability, while female public figures are increasingly granted the kinds of artistic canonization previously reserved principally for men. The *Zuckerman Bound* series as a whole is more concerned with the consequences of the former than the latter, however, and most centrally represents Roth's



determination not to be trapped by the limitations that constrain his alter ego.

In *The Prague Orgy* (1985), the brief epilogue to the first Zuckerman trilogy, Roth returns to his original models of literary fame, Anne Frank and Franz Kafka, and demonstrates not only that they cannot work for him but also that they are no longer operative at all in an era divided between a place where “everything goes and nothing matters” and a place where “nothing goes and everything matters” (“Philip Roth”). The West corrupts its authors with instantaneous celebrity while the East destroys its authors by condemning them to permanent obscurity. Anne Frank again figures not as an author but as a role, yet this time, instead of enabling the career of the actress who played her, the role has destroyed it. Eva Kalinova, the middle-aged refugee whom Zuckerman meets in the opening pages, was fired from the Prague National Theater for playing the role, and later in the novel Zuckerman laments “how they have used Anne Frank as a whip to drive her from the stage, how the ghost of the Jewish saint has returned to haunt her as a demon” (*Prague Orgy* 61).

As for Franz Kafka, he has been replaced by Olga Sisovksy, who, Zuckerman is told, “was the most famous woman in the country” (28). Olga herself then tells him, “Are you looking for Franz Kafka? The intellectuals all come here looking for Kafka. Kafka is dead. They should be looking for Olga” (29). Zuckerman attempts to retrieve from Olga the short story manuscripts by an obscure Czech Jew who was killed in the Holocaust and whose talents are repeatedly compared with Kafka’s. Zuckerman tells Olga that he will try to publish an article about the stories in the *New York Times*, but Olga, who wants him to marry her and take her to America, replies in outrage, “You will be hero to the Jews and to literature and to all of the Free World. On top of your millions of dollars and millions of girls you will win the American Prize for

Idealism about Literature. And what will happen to me? I will go to prison for smuggling a manuscript to the West” (72). The logic of the posthumous “discovery” of literary genius is no longer operative in a world where literature garnishes “millions of dollars and millions of girls” in America while in Eastern Europe it condemns one to prison. Roth must work out some other temporal logic whereby the honor of posthumous fame is achievable in a cultural environment saturated with contemporaneous celebrity.

### *The Counterlife (The Facts) and Death*

Roth discovers this logic in *The Counterlife*. Like *The Anatomy Lesson*, this text features a Zuckerman who has exhausted his literary resources, who claims that “as a writer I’d mined my past to its limits, exhausted my private culture and personal memories, and could no longer even warm to squabbling over my work” (283). The reference to Howe’s article here is pointed and deliberate, signaling that the preceding trilogy and epilogue had proved sufficiently that Roth possesses the cultural credentials to be a respected Jewish American author. But *The Counterlife* also signals that Roth’s aspirations are higher than that, and the text lays the groundwork for the Jamesian major phase to come, which will allow him to go above and beyond anything the New York intellectuals may have expected. For this shift, it is necessary that Zuckerman move beyond his personal life, and the best way for him to do that is to die.

*The Counterlife* aligns death with impotence, the cardiac medication’s “single terrible side effect,” which drives Henry and Nathan Zuckerman in separate chapters to undertake the operation that will lead to their demise (3).<sup>9</sup> In establishing this alignment as, in essence, the premise that links the text’s embedded and entangled narratives, Roth signals that Zuckerman’s death will serve the function of dividing carnal desire from narrative

drive, situating his avatar as a ghost between two deaths who can serve as the pseudo-posthumous author of the masterpieces still to come. Or, more aptly, Zuckerman will become the conduit for stories purportedly told by others. His English paramour Maria tells him in her crucial revelation at the end of chapter 4, "I know now what a ghost is. It is the person you talk to. That's a ghost. Someone who's still so alive that you talk to them and talk to them and never stop" (254). This function of ghostly auditor will become Zuckerman's role in the American trilogy: he is the one who listens to the compulsive stories of others, others who need their stories to be told.

For the living author, these compulsions translate into the kinds of homicidal overidentification associated with Alvin Pepler, who reappears in *The Counterlife* as Jimmy Ben-Joseph, the obsessed fan Zuckerman meets at the Wailing Wall, who proclaims, "I've read all your books! You wrote about my family!" and then returns as the maniacal hijacker on Zuckerman's plane back to England from Israel. Like Pepler, Jimmy is a figure for readers who not only confuse author with protagonist but also usurp the rights of authorship for themselves. He is attempting to hijack not just the plane but the very story Zuckerman is writing. Thus, Zuckerman realizes with horror that Jimmy's statement for the press, "Forget Remembering," is "the title of the play and the assassin is the self-appointed son who learned all he knows at my feet. Farce is the genre, climaxing in blood" (171). The oblique reference to Marx's dictum on how history repeats itself restages yet again the contrast between the honor of posthumous fame and the shame of contemporaneous celebrity, as Zuckerman is repeatedly subjected to the murderous misreadings of his fans.

Roth rewrites Zuckerman's life as tragic by killing him off, an act that retroactively turns his breakout bestseller, *Carnovsky*, into a masterpiece by way of his editor's eulogy. As his brother, Henry, fumes, the eulogy—

which, it turns out, Zuckerman himself wrote in anticipation of his death—has the effect of elevating "*Carnovsky* to the level of a *classic*" (213). Roth has learned the lesson of his modernist forebears, that true literary fame and recognition can only be posthumous, but he gives it a postmodern twist by achieving it vicariously, by killing off his avatar and then resurrecting him to write the novels that will cement his reputation.

Before Zuckerman reemerges as the author of the magisterial American trilogy, he figures as an interlocutor in Roth's attempt to come clean about his actual past, *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (1988). Roth's reminiscences are preceded by a letter to Zuckerman, purportedly requesting his advice, and followed by a letter from Zuckerman, advising against publication. The autobiography itself ends with the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint*, thus leading up to, but not actually narrating, the creation of Nathan Zuckerman as an authorial alter ego. The chronology of *The Facts*, then, further confirms the publication of *Portnoy's Complaint* as a dividing line in Roth's life and in a sense cedes the second half of that life to the Zuckerman cycle that follows.

*The Facts* establishes some significant differences between Roth's biography and Zuckerman's, particularly in the familial dynamics. We learn that, unlike Zuckerman's, Roth's family supported his work throughout his career. We also learn that Roth is the younger, not the older, brother (Roth's older brother, Sandy, was a commercial artist, not a dentist). In his letter, Zuckerman takes exception to Roth's sentimentalizing of his family, but Zuckerman's most insistent critique involves the treatment of Roth's disastrous marriage to Margaret Martinson Williams, named Josie in the text, who died in a car accident just before *Portnoy* went to press. Zuckerman insists that Roth give Josie her "real name," explaining that "Josie is the real antagonist, the true counterself, and



shouldn't be relegated like the other women to a kind of allegorical role" (179). Zuckerman's unheeded advice not only affirms the crucial importance of this relationship for Roth, it also establishes that the absence of this relationship constitutes the most significant difference between the facts of Philip Roth's biography and the fiction of Nathan Zuckerman's. Though Zuckerman was initially conceived, in the torturous crucible of *My Life as a Man* (1974), as a way of dealing with Williams, once he appears full-blown in *The Ghost Writer* his life unfolds without the domestic derailment that dominated Roth's life in the sixties. Zuckerman enabled Roth to rewrite his life without her in it.

*The Facts*, then, provides a chronological and biographical dividing line between Philip Roth and Nathan Zuckerman. Chronologically speaking, *Portnoy's Complaint* is confirmed as the watershed moment, the publication of which, as we have already seen, precipitated the need for an avatar to manage the consequences of celebrity. Biographically speaking, Margaret Martinson Williams makes the difference; if she threw Roth's career off course, Zuckerman gets him back on it. Thus, when Roth concludes the autobiographical section of the text with the affirmation that he "was determined to be an absolutely independent, self-sufficient man—to recapture, in other words, twelve years on, at age thirty-five, that exhilarating, adventurous sense of personal freedom" (160) that he had had before he met her, he is speaking as much of Zuckerman as he is of himself.

### Codamerica

The Nathan Zuckerman of the American trilogy is as good as dead. Impotent and incontinent, living in Lonoffish isolation in the New England countryside, Zuckerman is no longer the subject of his stories but has become a conduit through which stories flow. The fact that these stories focus on the lives of others means

that Zuckerman literally becomes a ghostly presence, hovering around the edges of his characters' lives, listening without being seen, vanishing entirely for long stretches of narrative. And, now that he is no longer the subject of his stories, they no longer engage his personal desires. Zuckerman has become an oracular site of pure narrative drive; like Hamlet's ghost, he embodies a compulsion to tell. And the inertial power of this drive is illustrated by the scale and scope of its products; *American Pastoral*, *I Married a Communist*, and *The Human Stain*, each longer than any previous Zuckerman title, came out in rapid succession between 1997 and 2000, astonishing everyone with the speed of their production and the scope of their ambition. Roth had achieved, while still alive, what his modernist forebears had only fully achieved after death: classic status. It is appropriate, then, that he is only the third living writer to have his works published by the Library of America.

Ross Posnock has recently affirmed that "Roth is actively defying the trajectory of most major twentieth-century American novelists," whose early work is unanimously seen as their best, the prelude to a falling off in quantity and quality in their later careers, usually attributed to the burdens and distractions of economic success and critical consecration. The "falling off from their prime" that characterizes the careers of such modernist masters as Faulkner and Hemingway confirms that the tension between contemporaneous recognition and posthumous acclaim predated Roth's career and can be understood as constitutive of modernist success as such (4). However, during the modern era the two temporalities were still distinct, both conceptually and practically, and the standard career arc was to begin in obscurity and achieve coterie recognition before catapulting to mass cultural renown later in life. By the time of Roth's later career, the two temporalities have effectively collapsed into each other,

generating the instant classics characteristic of the postmodern moment.

It is interesting and informative, then, that the analogue of Roth's late-career productivity predates the modern era; as Posnock notes, "late Roth is now beginning to deserve comparison with what is usually regarded as the summit of late turns of novelistic genius—Henry James' major phase at the start of the century" (4–5). Such invocations of a Jamesian "major phase" became almost unavoidable after the publication of *The Human Stain*, but I would argue that this designation cuts two ways. The novels invoke the late James in their ambition but also in their form, which makes them, in the end, more derivative than the exceptional cycle that precedes them. As a uniquely symptomatic response to the new temporalities of reception that constitute the shift to postmodernism, the first trilogy is a truly remarkable achievement, while the second one is something of a coda, ironically confirming the solitary despair with which both trilogies conclude. The American trilogy is a notable achievement, but it is also infused with an awareness of the loss of the conditions that would make it more culturally significant.

### Enjoy Your Afterlife

*Exit Ghost* opens with the claim "I had ceased to inhabit not just the great world but the present moment" (1). As Jaffe-Foger affirms, borrowing her terminology from Thomas H. Kane, it is an "automortographical" text, one in which the author prefigures his or her own death ("Philip Roth" 67). And *Exit Ghost* also brings the entire Zuckerman cycle full circle, returning to E. I. Lonoff, now long dead, and Amy Bellette, now dying of cancer, still stubbornly devoted to her ex-lover's legacy. The thematic focus of *Exit Ghost* is, not surprisingly, biography, the genre that haunts any claimant to literary celebrity, at least on the modernist model. In this elegiac text, Zuckerman finds himself doing verbal battle with Richard Kli-

man, a young and eagerly ambitious aspiring biographer of Lonoff, who claims he has a sensational secret that will resuscitate interest in the forgotten author. At first Zuckerman, outraged by the invasion of privacy, vows to fight, telling him "the last thing Lonoff wanted was a biographer" (45). But eventually Zuckerman realizes that he cannot stop Kliman from pursuing Lonoff's biography and that when it is finished there will be no way to prevent him "from turning his blazing attention on me. Once I was dead, who could protect the story of my life from Richard Kliman?" (275).

Jaffe-Foger claims that Roth kills Zuckerman in order "to explore the possibilities of what *might* happen if he were forced to relinquish all control" ("Philip Roth" 69), but I would argue that Zuckerman is in fact part of a larger strategy of Roth's to extend his control beyond his death, to protect his story from the Richard Klimans of the literary world. Indeed, in the recent *Paris Review* interview in which he confirmed the rumors that he was retiring from writing fiction, Roth claims that he has been keeping busy stage-managing his biography: "I've been working instead on my archives so I can turn them over to my biographer. I've turned over thousands of pages which are like memoirs but not literary, not publishable as such. I don't want to write my memoirs, but I wanted my biographer to have the material for his book before I die" ("In"). And he further claims that he has instructed his executors to destroy his archives once his biographer, Blake Bailey, is through with them. Roth, in other words, wants to use this last gap between two deaths, between his retirement as a novelist and his physical death, to "authorize" the biographical account of his life. The fact that he is on his second "official" biographer confirms the degree to which he is determined to control his posthumous representation and reputation.

On 18 March 2013 I delivered an early version of this paper at Roth@80, a two-day event in Newark consisting of a conference



and a celebration of Philip Roth's eightieth birthday. The birthday began at the Newark Public Library, with a remarkable exhibit of photos from Roth's private collection, ranging from infancy to old age. Significantly, there were no photos with Margaret Martinson Williams or her children (nor any photos with Claire Bloom). This was followed by a bus tour of Newark, though little remains of the city Roth grew up in. The evening's events were held at the Newark Museum and included opening remarks by Jonathan Lethem, Hermione Lee, Claudia Roth Pierpont, and Alain Finkielkraut. Lee and Pierpont vigorously defended Roth's gender politics and his representation of female characters. That this defense was part of the overall agenda of the evening seemed confirmed when Roth was introduced by his old friend Edna O'Brien, who dismissed rumors that they had been lovers.

Roth then gave a reading from *Sabbath's Theater* (1995) that the *New Yorker* editor, David Remnick, called "the most astonishing literary performance I've ever witnessed." Roth read from a late scene in which the protagonist, Mickey Sabbath, visits the Jewish cemetery where his family is buried. The scene is an extended meditation on death, and of the seven pages Roth read, a full page was given over to the inscriptions on the gravestones. What gave this monotony of "beloveds" such astonishing tonal power was the obvious joy with which Roth voiced this litany of loss. It was as if the author, suspended between two deaths, had already written and was now reading his own epitaph, and enjoying it. We may be mourning Zuckerman, but Philip Roth is clearly enjoying his afterlife.

theory, Masiero meticulously details how Roth establishes Zuckerman as a coherent and continuous character across the various texts that feature him. While Masiero is also invested in analyzing the parallels between Roth's autobiography and Zuckerman's fictional life, she is unconcerned with the features of the literary and cultural field that would make such an avatar necessary in the first place and that help to explain the discontinuities and incoherencies that she works to downplay and discount.

2. While Moran's chapter on Roth is indispensable for any discussion of Zuckerman and celebrity, it was written before the publication of the American trilogy and *Exit Ghost*, which prevents Moran from fully appreciating the degree to which Zuckerman differs from Roth's other authorial avatars.

3. For useful discussions of Hemingway and celebrity, see Raeburn; Leff; Glass 139–74.

4. Lacan's seminar generated a lengthy debate on feminism, psychoanalysis, and ethics. In addition to Žižek, the key texts in the debate are Butler and Copjec.

5. In an essay written before the publication of *Exit Ghost*, Alexis Kate Wilson affirms that ghosts constitute "a grander theme" uniting the novels in *Zuckerman Bound* (105). The publication of this last title reveals the degree to which the theme stretches across the entire Zuckerman cycle.

6. As Masiero confirms, "[T]he thematic trajectory of the first trilogy might be considered to span from unmitigated sexual urge and imaginative total indulgence to physical incapacity and the loss of one's subject matter, and the second shows Roth (via Zuckerman) as a social novelist caring about history's cultural minutiae" (14).

7. According to Donald Kartiganer, *The Ghost Writer* characterizes "Lonoff as the selfless saint of high modernism and Zuckerman as the self-indulgent, irreverent postmodernist" (36).

8. The most direct antecedent of O'Shea is Barbra Streisand, whom Roth was rumored to be dating in the late sixties, but O'Shea is also based on Roth's second wife, Claire Bloom, who had brought the Kierkegaard text to his notice and who, according to Roth, resembled Anne Frank (Roth, *Reading* 193–96; Bloom 168–69; Pierpont 124–26).

9. Roth himself had been diagnosed with coronary artery disease some years before and had, unsurprisingly, decided against taking the medication mentioned here.

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## NOTES

1. There is only one book-length study dedicated entirely to Nathan Zuckerman, Pia Masiero's *Philip Roth and the Zuckerman Books: The Making of a Story World*. Deploying a combination of narrative and reader-response

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Chinua Achebe:  
A Tribute

Chinua Achebe, a Father of Modern African Literature

ELLEKE BOEHMER

If it is true that legends never die but only grow and transmogrify, then the death of the African literary giant Chinua Achebe, at the age of eighty-two, on 21 March 2013, will do nothing to dim his assured status as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century. Two months after his death, he was buried in his hometown, Ogidi, in the state of Anambra, Nigeria, after a week of funeral rites in the national and state capitals, as well as at Nsukka University, where he worked as an academic in the early 1970s. The ceremonies marked Nigeria's sense that here was a writer whose vision had shaped not only the nation's understanding of itself but also, and as profoundly, anglophone world letters. In 2007 these contributions were justly acknowledged with the award to Achebe of the Man Booker International Prize, which recognizes the full trajectory of a writer's career and achievements.

The death of a literary figure bearing a reputation at once local, national, and international invariably raises questions about the writer's legacy and the afterlife of his or her work. Achebe's legacy appears particularly well founded, for at least two reasons. First, there is his role in interrogating what might be termed canonical racism in the academy—especially by way of “An Image of Africa,” the bold, uncompromising essay on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in which Achebe scrutinized critics' long-term indifference to the inarticulacy of Africans in the novella. That his essay has been included alongside the Conrad classic in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* since the anthology's seventh edition, linking his name indelibly to that of the colonial writer, is a mark of an important and lasting quality in Achebe's work—his ability to give memorable, if also inevitably controversial, expression to the core concerns of the modern human and African conditions. Unsurprisingly, Nelson Mandela, that leading African humanist, was during his incarceration on Robben Island an inspired reader and admirer of Achebe's work.

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Biographical notes about the contributors appear on page 256.

The second reason for assuming the endurance of Achebe's legacy is that his first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), permanently changed perceptions of African literature on the continent and worldwide. In 1964 a comparable impact was made by *Arrow of God*, many readers' favorite work by Achebe, which explores a similar sensory and mythic space. To date, the tale of how the yam farmer Okonkwo's intransigence fatally comes up against missionary infiltration in Igboland remains the best-selling African story of all time, ten million copies of which have been sold in fifty languages. To the same degree as Salman Rushdie's perhaps more widely celebrated *Midnight's Children*, *Things Fall Apart* deserves to be regarded as an inaugural postcolonial novel. Though its appearance predated the institutional establishment of the postcolonial and world literary studies fields, it nonetheless helped to determine the protocols whereby the postcolonial novel might be read (Bahri 44). The classical status of Achebe's work, therefore, is undeniable. After 1958 African literature could be authoritatively viewed as literature and not as anthropology or sociology, as it was often labeled by its colonial-era detractors. Even if the traditional subject matter of *Things Fall Apart* was unfamiliar to a metropolitan reader, the novel's epic arc and the tragic fate of its hero, Okonkwo, enabled the work to transcend its superficially exotic aspects.

The question of Achebe's global and generational influence became particularly acute within days of his death, when his compatriot Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Prize-winning playwright, gave an interviewer a seemingly ambiguous, or at least qualified, answer about Achebe's media-inflated status as the "father of African literature." In response to the question about African literature's paternity, Soyinka commented that Achebe's place in the canon of world literature was assured "wherever the art of the story-teller is celebrated" but that the attribution of fatherhood

betrayed "momentary exuberance" and an ignorance of Africa's myriad other literary traditions, in a host of languages. Since only one biological father is possible, the question evidently reignited for Soyinka a long-standing rivalry with a compatriot, Achebe, whose literary-critical terrain, like his, was much given to genealogical and familial metaphors.

Readers of Achebe might well wish to question the decorum and appropriateness of damning his reputation with unmistakably faint praise at a time when the writer's body had hardly begun its transit to Nigeria for a hero's burial. It would seem that differences of national and regional affiliation possibly thrown up by Achebe's 2012 publication of *There Was a Country*, his personal history of the Nigeria-Biafra war and lament for Nigeria's unfulfilled promise, may have worked paradoxically to exacerbate other differences between the two writers. On one specific level, however, Soyinka's response was undoubtedly a fair one. Looking no further than the significant African novelists, poets, playwrights, and journalists active in the 1910s and 1920s, in various languages, African and European, we would be hard-pressed to raise up a *single* father of modern African literature, nor would a writer as nuanced and thoughtful as Achebe wish to assume the mantle. The question is flawed, since it takes for granted the existence of a monadic and homogeneous Africa—much as the characterization of the continent as simply Africa, without reference to any countries, as on tourist Web sites, can do.

Even so, it is possible to credit Achebe with the foundation of modern imaginative literature in Africa in the postwar period, as one of his major critics, Lyn Innes, acknowledged in her *Guardian* obituary. Moreover, he was not only a practitioner but also an important architect of that literature, in particular in his role as the editor of the influential African Writers Series for nearly a decade (Currey 34–35). These contributions Soyinka neatly sidesteps, perhaps with an eye to safeguard-



ing his own legacy from rival influences. Yet, expanding the case for Achebe's global significance, his oeuvre is as varied in genre and approach as that of any world writer one might care to mention, ranging from the tragic histories already cited through the social satires *A Man of the People* (1966) and *No Longer at Ease* (1960) and the Booker-short-listed political novel *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) to literary essays, poetry, short stories, and memoir. From the early 1960s onward, Achebe's global status incrementally solidified as rising new generations of writers across Africa defined their voices by interacting with his characteristic mixed Igbo and English inflections. His influential perspectives on the interaction of modern life with tradition, on the colonial incursion and the struggle for national freedom, and on other keynote African yet also global themes mark the work of the many who have written in his wake, in Nigeria and elsewhere, including those in his immediate Igbo cultural circle. As the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, one of his literary daughters, aptly put it, Achebe "gave permission" (Boehmer 141). The British Nigerian writer Ben Okri relatedly wrote that Achebe allowed all humankind to dream more richly (132).

In English departments across the Anglo-American world, Achebe is now best known, not to say notorious in some contexts, for his talking back to institutional racism and to the biases of the English literature canon in the Conrad essay. Ironically, given his receptiveness toward English as at once a colonial language and an African lingua franca, he became regarded as *the* combative black African voice. In fact, however, his views were always a great deal more ameliorative, nuanced, and conciliatory than this characterization suggests, as is clear from his debates with more radical writers, like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, about English as a medium of African expression. He made of what he called the Igbo philosophy of "the middle ground" a highly crafted, writerly

approach (based on one of his favorite proverbs, "Wherever Something Stands, Something Else Will Stand Beside It" [*Education* 5–6]).

Yet it is not only for his foundational position nor even for his willingness to speak truth to power and indict the Western world for its racial biases that Achebe deserves his readers' undying respect. His reputation as a great world writer rests centrally on his staggering success in wresting Africa into non-African frameworks of cognition through the medium of the novel form, yet, importantly, without ever compromising or substantially changing his novels' structures of religious and cultural reference. With *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, in particular, a coherent, "self-engendered" world sprang into the world's view, as if from nowhere (Gikandi 317). Finally, by contrast with the many negative images of Africa that still circulate in the global media, Achebe let us know that Africa—the many countries and communities that make it up—is a vast cultural universe, coherent, involving, richly textured, the same as any other complex cultural universe. If, as the philosopher Achille Mbembe warns us, we should remember when we write of Africa that doing so should not merely be a pretext to write of Europe, then Achebe's great achievement has been always to write of Africa as the core yet also the whole of the world.

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## Chasms and Silences: For Chinua Achebe

RHONDA COBHAM-SANDER

Achebe valued the power of silence. His work insists that seemingly unbridgeable chasms in a text or a culture alert us to possibilities beyond our grasp. Like the Caribbean novelist Wilson Harris, Achebe understood that such chasms leave us space to imagine how "eclipsed bridges and potential bridges exist between divorced or separated or closed orders and worlds, bridges that are sometimes precarious, never absolute, but which . . . engender a profound awareness of the numinous solidity of space, inner space/outer space, space as the womb of simultaneous densities and transparencies in the language of originality" (Harris 239).

When I first wrote about *Things Fall Apart*, I argued that Achebe's silences finessed moments where the competing literary expectations of British anthropologists and Western romance readers intersected with a new Nigerian elite's modernist aspirations, as well as its nostalgia for those unnamed *things*, whose existence no one had thought to articulate until they fell apart. For examples of this architecture and process, I focused on the novel's strategic silences around gender issues. However, *Things Fall Apart* contains other moments where silence registers possibilities beyond representation.

Okonkwo brings us to the brink of one such chasm when he contemplates his son Nwoye's defection to join the Christians:

Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his fathers crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of by-gone days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god. (153)

The novel does not counter this haunting image of cultural annihilation, and Okonkwo's ignominious death seems to realize his worst fears. Yet the fact that a Christianized author orchestrates such anxieties suggests that ideological bridges a previous generation could not have foreseen already had begun to criss-cross the chasm Okonkwo feared would engulf his memory.

Conversely, in delineating Nwoye's consciousness the novel acknowledges Christianity's potential, even though in *No Longer at Ease* that potential never materializes. The new religion's poetry unearths memories of unnamed twins and missing sacrificial vic-



tims who, like the spirits crowding around Okonkwo's ancestral shrine, waited "in vain for worship and sacrifice and [found] nothing but ashes." The novel never really identifies what the return of those repressed bodies portends. Nevertheless, their absent presences stir up desires in Nwoye beyond mere oedipal resistance or a hankering after modernity. They intimate unnamed possibilities "felt in the marrow" (147).

For Achebe, too, aporia remained. In "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," he comments on his Christian father's relationship—cordial and tolerant—with an unreconstructed pagan relative. After recounting his father's description of a dream in which this relative engages Achebe *père* in conversation about a modern zinc roof, Achebe *filis* reflects:

There was something between those two that I find deep, moving and perplexing. And of those two generations—defectors and loyalists alike—there was something I have not been able to fathom. That was why the middle story in the Okonkwo trilogy as I originally projected it never got written. I had suddenly become aware that in my gallery of ancestral heroes there is an empty place from which an unknown personage seems to have departed. (Hopes 33)

As Achebe tells it, neither man sees the other in terms of cultural betrayal. Moreover, the uncle, whose praise name Udo Osinyi means "Udo who cooks more than the whole people can eat," seems rather taken with the possibilities for ostentatious display that modern zinc roofing offers (32). Nor can we be sure which of the two men Achebe sees as "defector" and which as "loyalist." The bridges thrown across generational chasms in Achebe's first novel can neither reconcile these cultural positions nor assign them to opposing camps. A Christian father capable of amiable chitchat with a pagan traditionalist about zinc roofing remains beyond representation.<sup>1</sup>

In *There Was a Country*, Achebe's final memoir, all these ghosts come crowding

back, jostling one another for attention until their "densities and transparencies" take on a "numinous solidity" (Harris 239). Yet, even as Achebe launches his exposé, which he implies will tell all, he pauses to invoke and embody silence's value: "Mother was neither talkative nor timid but seemed to exist on several planes—often quietly escaping into the casements of her mind, where she engaged in deep, reflective thought. It was from her that I learned to appreciate the power and solace in silence" (9). As Achebe's halting, partial account of the Nigerian civil war and the failure of the Biafran state unfolds, his mother's silence takes on proverbial significance, framing without naming the issues at stake in his decision to break his personal silence about his involvement in the secessionist struggle and its effect on his family, friendships, and professional alliances.<sup>2</sup>

To gauge the intractability of Achebe's reticence, one has only to compare *There Was a Country* with Wole Soyinka's parallel memoir, *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*. Soyinka prides himself on having "crammed [his] lines" as a messenger between the Biafran rebels and the federal forces so successfully that decades later he can still confound revisionist accounts by delivering those lines verbatim (132). Achebe, by contrast, dwells on how often, even as an emissary of the Biafran state, he did not understand what was happening and how unfathomable the changes in his personal status seemed: from a respected Nigerian broadcaster, living in affluent Lagos suburbia, to a stateless refugee, retreating into the Biafran bush. Observing his unraveling, we begin to understand why as a writer he finds both solace and power in silence.

Two anecdotes in Achebe's memoir illuminate this paradox. One recounts how the Citadel, the publishing house Achebe and the poet Christopher Okigbo established in Biafra, suppressed a manuscript it had received from an army major involved in the coup that killed Nigeria's president and precipitated

civil war. Achebe recalls that he doubted the manuscript's veracity and was dismayed by its cavalier attitude toward assassination, while Okigbo pronounced it "lyrical." The account does not say how that debate ended, reporting only that "the manuscript seems to have disappeared." Achebe claims to regret not having published the major's memoir, since if he had "at least a version of what happened, however flawed . . . would be available for debate," yet he makes no attempt to summarize its contents (179). Instead, he leaves it to the reader to fill in the blanks, to imagine what about the war this missing memoir, characterized as both lyrical and a lie, might have clarified for him and us.

Initially, the second anecdote, describing the Citadel's involvement in publishing a children's book, reverses the silencing the first enacts. Working from John Iroaganachi's folktale about how the dog became domesticated, Achebe and Okigbo created a fable, called *How the Leopard Got Its Claws*, "that challenged the very essence of the Nigerian federation's philosophy" (185). After the war a Scandinavian press published the story with illustrations by the Norwegian artist Per Christiansen. However, Achebe compresses this time frame, placing the account of the book's publication just before the description of how the Citadel was bombed to rubble.<sup>3</sup> Achebe attributes his decision "to [walk] away from the site and from publishing forever" to this near-death experience (185).

Achebe's rationale for withdrawing from the arena of wartime propaganda leaves unsaid what his memoir's uncertain chronology cannot mask: that the Citadel attack and its aftermath may have helped propel Okigbo into battle, where he was killed almost instantaneously. The juxtaposed stories about the children's book and the Citadel's bombing, like the differing reactions to the major's unpublished memoir, expose unresolved tensions in the two writers' responses to responsibility and risk. "Don't let him die," Achebe's

son pleads when news of his favorite uncle's death reaches him (184). Achebe's work circles back repeatedly to that impossible charge and its unanswerable question: whether he did in fact fail in his duty to his comrade, whether his caution might have left the more impulsive Okigbo more vulnerable. The poet's obliterated body exposes the relational chasms that destroyed the country that was: the unified Nigerian nation, which initially signified unlimited aspiration for Achebe's golden generation, as well as the doomed and quixotic but no less precious homeland that secessionist Biafra came to represent.

Achebe's completed artistic trajectory tempts us toward hagiography. Achebe was neither saint nor prophet, however, for writers can never anticipate all the possible readings their works conceal. He used silence strategically in his celebrated first novel to reconcile conflicting ideological currents in the discourse of his historical moment, but his oeuvre leaves other chasms unbridged. Although he did not know how to cross them, Achebe was too scrupulous to deny their existence. Even as they continue to exceed articulation, Achebe's silences allow us, with Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart*, to intuit "something felt in the marrow," which future readers eventually may retrieve (147).

## NOTES

1. The homology between Achebe's act of paternal recall and Lacan's account of Freud's reference to a man who encountered his father in a dream and "did not know that he was dead" is uncanny (Lacan 801–02). In *Reading Lacan*, Jane Gallop offers many compelling responses to the question of which father or which son is dead or displaced in Lacan's account. From the perspective of Achebe's narrative, what seems most striking is the way that Lacan and Achebe invoke Freud and Achebe *père*, respectively, as putative narrators only to displace their narrative authority. In the end Lacan's dreamer and Achebe's traditionalist ancestor have more substance than either of the narrating father figures who recall them into the text.



2. The memoir's fragmented structure and the chop-piness of its writing, as compared with the prose of the earlier essays in *The Trouble with Nigeria*, suggest that sections of the text were retrieved from Achebe's dictated notes or from an unfinished manuscript. That possibility shapes my reading of the memoir as an incomplete attempt to come to terms with what must have remained for Achebe and many others an unresolved trauma.

3. For a full account of the book's publishing history, see Winter.

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## "Restraint . . . My Style": Deliberative and Mournful

UZOMA ESONWANNE

. . . I am a protest writer, with restraint.

—Chinua Achebe

Chinua Achebe's literary ideology is unambiguous: literary production in Africa must be committed, must speak, must protest. Not for him *l'art pour l'art*. Declaring in *There Was a Country* (2012) that writing is morally obliged to ally itself with the "powerless," Achebe calls himself "a protest writer, with restraint" (58). He had said this in an interview in 1969: responding to the notion that he showed too much restraint to be a protest writer, he said, ". . . I am a protest writer. Restraint—well, that's my style, you see" ("Group Interview" 246–47). So if he repeated it, he must have believed that the tone of his prose was consistently restrained. Ac-

cording to the *Compact Oxford Thesaurus*, *restraint* means "constraint," "restriction," "moderation," "judiciousness," "understatedness," and "subtlety." But since Achebe's theory of art derives from *mbari*, "a festival of life" (Cole xv), I suggest that for him *restraint* meant "measured." But what, literally, could a consistently measured style be? Could it be so stable that it is the same across multiple texts?

To say Achebe's prose is measured, then, is to claim that all the elements of his writing are carefully selected and calibrated for rhetorical effectiveness. Few readers of Achebe's fiction, particularly *Arrow of God* (1964), would contest this. But Achebe seems to be saying that his style in his nonfiction writing is consistently measured as well. Along with *mbari*, his theory of art is also indebted to

the Igbo masquerade, whose dynamism, like that of *mbari*, he repeatedly cites (*There* 59). If *mbari* and the masquerade are his aesthetic prototypes, is he not contradicting himself by claiming that his style is consistently measured? How could the style in which his art is rendered be consistently measured if his art is dynamic? These questions are especially significant in the light of the proposition that intertextual references to *Things Fall Apart* in “third generation” Nigerian writing “point to a drive for a new literacy” capable of “sensing the new nuances of postcoloniality” (Osinubi 160). Is it possible that Achebe, whose literary career overlaps with the careers of these later writers, fashioned no “new literacy” to interpret these “nuances”? How could a restrained style crafted to chronicle the life of Okonkwo, a nineteenth-century protagonist more suited to war than to “the art of negotiation” (Osinubi 160), equally serve for *There Was a Country*, Achebe’s memoir and last work, which chronicles the process by which the peoples of a postcolonial African state asphyxiated themselves by embracing war?

*There Was a Country* belongs to Achebe’s late period. If his style is invariably measured, then it is at odds with current thinking about late style. According to that thinking, late style does not seamlessly complete or harmoniously conclude its antecedent. On the contrary, far from seeking to reach out beyond itself, late style “only” deepens lateness; the consciousness of “late figures” (e.g., Theodor Adorno) is exilic, irascible, and “ferociously” iconoclastic; and their style, which is “episodic,” “discontinuous,” “wayward and eccentric,” deepens lateness by breaking with convention (Said 13, 10–24, 148). To accept this view is either to reject the proposition that Achebe’s tone is consistently measured across his career and across genres or to argue that his is the exception in late style. The latter proposition is undoubtedly viable, but I would like to argue that in his late works, particularly in *There Was a Country*, the deliberative restraint of the ear-

lier writing yields to a defiant restraint that is nonetheless mournful. Ideally, this argument should be based on an analysis of Achebe’s fiction, essays, poetry, and journalism, but I will focus on *Things Fall Apart* and *There Was a Country* because they bookend his career.

Achebe’s prose in *Things Fall Apart* proceeds at a leisurely pace, its rhythm set by the seasonal cycle of agricultural labor and ritual festivities that structure daily life in Umuofia. The following passage, taken from the scene in *Things Fall Apart* in which we first encounter Okonkwo, is exemplary: “The drum beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat” (5). “Spare” and “elegant” (Adichie x), each of the first three sentences consists of multiple clauses aggregated complementarily or contrastively, all building up, as in a musical performance, to the climactic simple declarative sentence: “In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.” It is almost as if, here, Achebe’s prose is striving for the pulsive rhythm of the drum. Enhancing this effect is the diction: in a literary mimesis of the clean, sharp beats of the drum, the reader’s vocal emphases fall on the verbs *beat*, *sang*, and *held* before modulating into the balanced syntax of the sentences that precede the violent climax. Just as graceful as the prose is the imagery: pitted against each other, Okonkwo’s piscine slipperiness and Amalinze’s feline wiliness acquire mythic resonance. So when, finally, the slippery fish overcomes the wily feline, readers, like the village audience watching the match, are as exhilarated by the triumph of the former as they are deflated by the defeat of the latter.

Collectively, Achebe’s protagonists are figures through which his narratives allegorize (the perversion of) power in public life as in private life. In thrall to it, they lose their sense



of self-restraint. Always this proves fatal: their ambition undercut, their social relationships estranged, they spiral into madness or die. In all we encounter a discrepancy between the measured tone of the narrative as reflected in its style and the excesses of the protagonists as depicted in plot events—thus, for example, the incongruity between Odili's nationalist aspirations in *A Man of the People* and the cliché-ridden idiom and disjunctive syntax in which he articulates them (Gikandi 121–22). Indeed, these discrepancies are stark and disconcerting because, emerging against a self-effacing prose that functions as a contrastive backdrop, they loom before us like a vivid counterpoint.

In *There Was a Country*, the discrepancy between event and style shrinks. Achebe's style is still measured. The mood has shifted, however, and no wonder, this being an elegiac jeremiad addressed to the “country” that, having secured its territorial integrity at great cost to life and property, now seems resolved to asphyxiate itself. Whereas the prevalent mood in Achebe's fictional prose was cogitative, now it is mournful. Consider the following passage:

The post Nigeria-Biafra civil war era saw a “unified” Nigeria saddled with a greater and more insidious reality. We were plagued by a homegrown enemy: the political ineptitude, mediocrity, indiscipline, ethnic bigotry, and corruption of the ruling class. Compounding the situation was the fact that Nigeria was now awash in oil-boom petrodollars, and to make matters even worse, the country's young, affable, military head of state, General Yakubu Gowon, . . . proclaimed to the entire planet that Nigeria had more money than it knew what to do with. A new era of great decadence and decline was born. It continues to this day. (243)

Taken from part 4, which briefly reappraises the country's rapid descent into anarchy before turning even more briefly to its future, this passage exhibits the same stylistic features I identified as typical of Achebe's prose: the syntax taut and graceful, the idiom for-

mal and hortatory, and the imagery luminous. The tone is as measured as it is in the passages analyzed earlier. However, the voice is strained and the mood mournful. Contemplating a country afflicted by “homegrown” disease and tended to by an unscrupulous and misguided leadership that is drowning in the national wealth it expropriates, Achebe equates contemporary Nigeria with the betrayal of the promises of “freedom,” security, dignity, and democratic self-governance that the country had held out to its peoples on the eve of independence (*There* 39–40, 108).

For Achebe, nowhere is that betrayal more painful than in the country's repression of knowledge of its genocidal past, a repression apt to engender repetition (228). In the interjection of the desire for a “new national consciousness” into a national history that censors the memory of its collective past (253), we encounter the measured irascibility that is the signature of Achebe's (postcolonial) late style.

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## Chinua Achebe and the Struggle for Discursive Authority in the Postcolonial World

HARRY GARUBA

Many claims have been made about the significance and influence of Chinua Achebe—especially his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*—in the making of African literature, African worlds, and African subjects. Many, if not all, of these claims are focused either on the historic importance of the novel in relation to the image of Africa inscribed in the colonial library or on Achebe's role in the constitution of modern African literature. There can be little doubt about the enormous cultural work that Achebe's fictional and nonfictional writing has done. But to read his oeuvre simply in the context of anticolonial nationalism and the cultural politics of colonial erasure and denigration is to confine it to an archive that does not provide us with adequate conceptual resources for dealing with the present.

In this short reflection, therefore, I will put these claims aside. Instead, I want to explore Achebe's importance for this moment, this postcolonial present. I am guided by his own pronouncements about the task of the writer and the capacity of narrative and art to provide us with a handle on the world. Since the publication of "The Novelist as Teacher," one of Achebe's signature essays of the 1960s, the idea of the novelist as a teacher has become almost synonymous with the name of Achebe in African literature. Toward the end of that piece, he writes, "I would be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past—with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (45). This sentiment was to become a major theme in many of his

other essays and interviews of the 1960s. He reiterates it in "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation" (1964): "This theme—put quite simply—is that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity" (8).

For Achebe this was the "fundamental theme that must first be disposed of" before one moves on to other themes (8). His recognition that disposing of this theme makes way for others indicates the nature of his historical consciousness, his awareness that the theme of African culture was specific to a historical moment and spoke to that moment. I will call this the moment of the colonial modern. Achebe also believed that "art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself with a second handle on existence *through his imagination*" ("Truth" 139). These two statements—one about the temporal specificity of art (the disposability of themes) and the other about art's perennial relevance (providing a second handle on existence through the work of the imagination)—present the rationale and background for the questions I pose in this piece: what new handle does Achebe's oeuvre provide us with as we deal with the postcolonial, postmodern, globalized world of the twenty-first century? what can the novelist teach us, or, more appropriately, what lessons for the present can we draw from his novels of tradition?

By way of answers, let me begin by reiterating that the work Achebe's novels were



made to do—did—at the historical moment of the colonial modern was to affirm, to prove, that African societies were not mindless and savage but were culturally sophisticated, functioning entities with their own rationalities and codes and “frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty.” I believe that this theme has now been “disposed of,” that after Achebe the idea of an African world of dignity and integrity has been validated, proved, and put beyond reasonable questioning. Proceeding from this premise, I want to read an episode from each of Achebe’s two novels of tradition to suggest one way of answering my questions.

*Things Fall Apart* ends with the District Commissioner’s plans to write a book that will include, among other things, some of the incidents and characters that make up the novel. Though “[e]very day brought him some new material for the book,” he needed to be “firm in cutting out details,” and so a chapter on Okonkwo—no, a “reasonable paragraph”—would do. Simon Gikandi notes that “[t]he ultimate irony of [this] novel is that although the Commissioner has the final word in the fictional text, Achebe—the African writer who has appropriated a Western narrative practice—writes the colonizer’s words and hence commemorates an African culture which the colonizer thought he had written out of existence” (50). I add that this strategic placing is also meant to underscore the struggle between the colonized and the colonizer for the power to narrate that, as Edward Said tells us, is the major connection between imperialism and culture.

This is why the last chapter of the novel *Arrow of God* is particularly significant. After Ezeulu, the chief priest of Ulu, refuses to declare the new yam festival, the people, facing famine, harvest their yams and take them to the new Christian god for blessing. Amid the string of misfortunes that befall Ezeulu—the desertion of the community; the death of his favorite son, Obika; his slow descent into

madness—he alone still has the prescience to discern the full import of what has happened. For him it was not a simple glitch in the historical process that could be rectified next time around; it was an irreversible tragedy from which none could escape. “What troubled him most—and he alone seemed to be aware of it at present—was that the punishment was not for now alone but for all time. It would afflict Umuaro like an *ogulu-aro* disease which counts a year and returns to the victim” (219). What disease-like punishment is this that afflicts for all time?

I suggest that the punishment is that *two discursive orders, both claiming normativity*, were established in the same social and geographic space. The discursive order in which traditional proverbs such as the one about the dancing mask had been enunciated and anchored was not the order of discursive conflict and contestation that colonial modernity had opened up;<sup>1</sup> animist tradition can more appropriately be described as a single or singular normative order that welcomed plurality and multiple perspectives. This was a premodern, precapitalist world into which the homogenizing imperative of modern power, with its disciplinary practices and normalizing technologies, had not been introduced. What Ezeulu foresaw was that once the ability to migrate from one set of norms to another or to shuttle between them in the same society without appearing deviant had been established, it was not going to disappear.

Probably nowhere but in the postcolonial world can subjects move between and inhabit two discursive and symbolic orders by simultaneous interpellation.<sup>2</sup> For me this is one of the defining characteristics of our postcolonial present, which an engaged criticism needs to explore in framing new questions and seeking new answers. Rereading Achebe’s novels of tradition from this perspective may yet yield the insights we need to begin.

## NOTES

1. The proverb of the dancing mask is often evoked to show that traditional Igbo society was one of multiplicity, one in which the recognition and adoption of plural subject positions were a value: "The world is like a Mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place" (*Arrow* 46). It is important to emphasize that this value of traditional animist culture is anchored in a single, overarching discursive order: the dancing mask thus shows different faces of the same epistemic-ideological order rather than contested normativities.

2. The simultaneous interpellation I refer to here is different from the concept of hybridity as used in current postcolonial criticism and cultural theory. It is also different from the multiculturalist perspective that finds its conceptual resources in the old anthropological conception of culture as bounded entities.

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How We Read *Things Fall Apart* Then

EILEEN JULIEN

*There are two ways to lose oneself: through segregation, walled off in the particular, or through dilution in the "universal."*

—Aimé Césaire (my trans.)

*Things Fall Apart* is from another century, another time and place.

Drawing its title from "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats's modernist poem, and emanating from an as-yet-innocent Nigeria, it is a preface to the coming storm of decolonization and seemingly endless cycles of violence and upheaval in sub-Saharan Africa.

There can be no question about Chinua Achebe's extraordinary revisioning of history, his grasp of the capacity of literature—specifically, the novel as shaped by his compelling prose—to force on the world a new reading of colonial conquest. Achebe examined the premises of empire and colonialism with a freshness and force that were remarkable and

unprecedented. And he did so in a short narrative accessible to millions of people around the world, schooled and less schooled.

Achebe's writing did not spring, as it was long supposed and often intimated, from his pen and head in a fit of intuitive, surrealist night writing but clearly drew at the very least, alongside Igbo oral traditions, on his readings of the Bible and works of creative literature and anthropology, which offered models of voice, motif, and phrasing (Cobham-Sander).

Achebe was not only a conjurer of worlds through words, however, but also a sage. We looked to him because of his deep faith in humanity and his unabashed moral vision, which earned him authority and respect, even when we might disagree with his interpretations and assessments of, for example, Joseph Conrad or Ayi Kwei Armah or Yambo Oulouem. Besides the archaeological unearthing of an ignored or, more often, willfully



obscured past that he performs in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Achebe's storytelling has a utopic, visionary dimension informed by his faith and hope (Gikandi).

I admit my great skepticism vis-à-vis "world literature," but it is hard to think of another twentieth-century author whose work has been translated into so many languages and traveled so far. He is the exemplar—if not the theorist—of early "postcolonial" literature, the one who inaugurated what would be known for fifty years as "African literature."

Despite the burdens of the term, the world still speaks of "African literature." Other novels by Africans—Félix Couchoro's *L'esclave* (1929; "The Slave"), Sol Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930), Thomas Mofolo's *Chaka* (written in Sesotho and first published in English translation in 1931), Ousmane Socé's *Karim* (1935), Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy* (1946)—preceded *Things Fall Apart*. But this nomenclature is in large measure the legacy of African writers of the 1950s and 1960s. We might say with Jorge Luis Borges that it took Chinua Achebe to make us see the patterns connecting these "precursors" and subsequent writers. It was first and foremost Achebe, then, who inaugurated African literature as a literature of anti-colonialism, of antiracism, of reclamation of identity and the precolonial past, the writing/righting of misrepresentations.

A reflection on this most extraordinary book and its author might take many directions. This might be the occasion to ponder Frantz Fanon's complaint that the creation of an "African" novel—and thereby already, I would argue, a pan-African or diasporic consciousness—undermined nationalist sentiment and engagement, for him the sine qua non of liberated African societies. One might also consider the way in which disciplinary fields shift because of ever-changing institutional, scholarly, and publishing practices as well as the massive displacement and circulation of African writers and artists and the intensive impact of technologies. What was for

half a century or more "African literature" may now be considered "national" or "ethnic" literature or, conversely, literature "from," "about," or "in" Africa, regardless of its author's phenotype or place of residence. Such literature today may be designated postcolonial (still) or tricontinental, or—given a prize or multiple translations—it may be admitted to the ranks of "world" literature, a powerful and transformative paradigm that nonetheless seems to me arbitrary and ultimately a classification without substance, one that still fails—do I ask too much?—to equalize, given the innumerable rolls of the dice required to propel any locally anchored text, written, say, in Arabic, Hausa, Swahili, Wolof, or Zulu, onto the international circuit (Julien, "Arguments"). One might, on the other hand, recall the extroversion of the Euro-language novel—not only its responsiveness to theories, isms, and social-scientific agendas generated by scholars, policy makers, and readers to the west and north but also its capacity to reach out beyond locality to readers everywhere (Julien, "Extroverted African Novel"). One might examine, too, the implications of the novel's finding some of its most fertile soil in the postcolonial South, a "contact zone" par excellence.

What I should like to explore here briefly is how we read *Things Fall Apart* and its sister texts when African literature was born. Anyone who has read Achebe's forceful essays, including, for example, "The Novelist as Teacher," is aware of the intellectual burden that this literature and its authors took on, as I indicated above. I would argue that the aesthetic protocols that came to signify Africa were in part a legacy of Achebe. By this I am referring to how we perceived the relation between the novel as a genre and local or indigenous resources, such as oral traditions.

Looking back at the 1969 Fawcett World Library paperback edition of *Things Fall Apart*, for example, one finds a testimony to the time and place of the novel's early reception. The back cover refers to the work as

“uniquely and richly African.” The *New York Times* is also cited: “*Things Fall Apart* takes its place with that small company of sensitive books that describe primitive society from the inside. In a few years there can be no more. Then these books will become a rich storehouse for the future, full of nostalgia, and (perhaps) a never-to-be-recaptured truth.”

The two templates for reading African literature in these early years come through loud and clear: first, the teleology that imagines African societies’ moving from tradition to modernity, with the angst-filled existential crisis this implies, and, second, the inclusion of or reference to oral traditions as formal adjustments that will convert the novel into an almost authentic African text (Moretti).

The premise of such readings is, of course, that the modern novel is European. What made African literature, including Achebe’s early novels, intelligible, then, was the assumption of the novel’s traveling from center to periphery and of its indigenization through the insertion of oral discourse. This engagement with “European form” has been read sometimes as appropriative (Pratt) but more often as derivative (Todorov).

Given the territory that he staked out and on which he planted the flag of African literature, Achebe set the bar high indeed for subsequent writers, in both the stories he told and the language in which he told them. “African” thus came to designate a challenge to imperial discourse and its underpinnings as well as an aesthetic of oral traditions, proverbial speech, and inflected syntax. What would African literature have become without this model, which necessarily was read as singular, real, and true? Would we have had African literature at all?

Today I should like my students to read the Achebe of the 1950s and other writers of the age of African literature while keeping in mind the urgent imperatives and damning assumptions of the age, even as more recent creative texts and scholarship have forced

us to see the limits of early gender-bound, nationalist, realist texts, with their mostly omniscient narrators, and to read even these texts more irreverentially, more playfully, more audaciously.

What if it was the traversing of boundaries, what if it was empire, as Edward Said claimed, that made the novel possible? What if the novel was less an imported, stable genre than an effect of publication, scholarly, and readerly practices—a *forma franca* that allows us to express our differences across cultures and to be intelligible not only in Africa and its proximate diasporas but also around the world?

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## Reading *No Longer at Ease* as a Text That Performs Local Cosmopolitanism

JAMES OGUDE

*No Longer at Ease* is Chinua Achebe's only novel that captures the difficult period of interregnum in Nigeria. In this novel Achebe grapples with the dilemma of representing that period of transition—the emergence of a new Nigerian nation—without falling into the trappings of national romance, particularly because Nigeria “had yet to evolve linguistic and cultural figures for a new national consciousness” (Gikandi 81).

In this paper I seek to argue that Achebe navigates this dilemma of transition by pointing to two forms of cosmopolitanism in tension with each other: one is idealistic and outside local history, a universalist type of cosmopolitanism that “resists settlement in particular, conflicted social and historical contexts,” while the other is inside history, a cosmopolitanism of local colonial subjects who, as Stephanie Newell argues, have been labeled mimics (104). By examining the tension between the members of the Umuofia Progressive Union (UPU) and Obi Okonkwo, I demonstrate that Achebe anticipates by several decades what has come to be called local cosmopolitanism. I aim to explore a cosmopolitanism that positions itself as universalist, in contrast to the groups that Kwame Anthony Appiah argues practice “segregation and seclusion” rather than global citizenship and inclusiveness (xviii). If critics like Appiah see the local as anticosmopolitanism, Achebe interrogates this assumption by creating an agonistic cosmopolitan subject, Obi Okonkwo, whose cosmopolitanism is shot through with contradictions, while juxtaposing him with the UPU, the body that sent Obi abroad to study, and with the discourses it represents.

Traveled, Obi believes that he can transcend not only his Englishness but also the

traditions of his people. To do this, he must reach out to a derivative modernist discourse wedded to the idea of the nation, a discourse that is essentially nationalist and therefore anticosmopolitan. Although Obi carries himself as a cosmopolitan, he is in fact a nationalist with a romantic idea of Nigerian nationhood. One of the ways through which Obi seeks to perform his Nigerianness is by marrying Clara, an *osu* (an outcast among the Ibo), an act that would serve as “willed entry into the desired nationalist space, a space transcending ethnic traditions and family loyalties.” And yet Obi can only occupy this space by marshaling arguments rooted in colonial grammar—“the doctrines of modernity and Christianity” (Gikandi 11). It is doubtful, though, whether Obi's attempts to evoke colonial grammar and values have any depth of conviction. They are his way of placating his parents, whose awareness of the authority of local histories and the demands of local geographies is sharper than Obi's. In telling Obi that “[b]ecause I suffered I understand Christianity” (125), his father, Isaac, suggests that experience has taught him not to act outside local histories and family loyalties as Obi tries to do. Indeed, the awareness of a curse on Isaac Okonkwo cast by his own father when Isaac turned his back on the family to embrace a new religion continues to haunt Obi's consciousness, especially when history threatens to repeat itself. At least Obi's father was decisive. Obi is not. His vacillation is the result of a form of idealism, born of his colonial education. And even though his parents are obviously serious, Obi is under the illusion that they will change their minds in good time. When confronted with Clara's pregnancy, Obi is paralyzed and cannot persuade her to keep the child.

Obi's biggest dilemma is that he wants to participate in both tradition and modernity selectively. He is looking for Nigerian food (31), but he cannot countenance its taboos. He wants to be close to his people, but he is concerned that Clara makes her dresses in the slums. He seeks to transcend tradition, and yet he cannot immerse himself in Englishness because it makes him feel like an outsider in his own language. "Let them come to Umuofia now and listen to the talk of men who made a great art of conversation," he observes during a meeting of the UPU (45). And yet when those men reproach him for "moving around with a girl of doubtful ancestry, and even thinking of marrying her," he storms out of the meeting and threatens the president of the union with court action, effectively turning his back on the community that sent him overseas. By evoking the authority of a colonial institution such as the court, he rejects his people's way of doing things.

Contrasted to the protagonist under siege are a group of "colonized" subjects whose travel is limited; they are bound to local power structures and loyalties, but, significantly too, they are a group "whose gestures towards English clothing and language are a source of derision only to those who have traveled" abroad like Obi (Newell 110). Members of the UPU have indeed also traveled, but only from their rural traditional base to Lagos, an urban center whose modern pleasures and alienation, they all acknowledge, are daunting challenges. Yet they are here, as one of them notes: not for work but for money, a new instrument of commodity transaction. If we accept the work of imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity in which territories come to be seen as conditions of possibility as much as of constraint, then Achebe's Lagos is one such space. It is, as Arjun Appadurai would have it, "a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern," thus permit-

ting the history of modernity to be rewritten "more as a vernacular globalization" (3-4). Some of these contestations take place on the margins—in gatherings such as those of the UPU and in eating and entertainment sites but also in the way cosmopolitanism is staged in ordinary things such as dressing codes.

One of the biggest sources of tension between Obi Okonkwo and the UPU relates to how he performs his cosmopolitanism. At his homecoming celebration, he fails to live up to the fantasies the people have about him, fantasies grounded on lived colonial mimicry. We read the narrator's ironic observation that when the people come to welcome Obi, everybody is "properly dressed in *agbada* or European suit except the guest of honor, who appeared in his shirtsleeves because of the heat." The narrator comments on Obi's attitude: "That was Obi's mistake Number One. Everybody expected a young man from England to be impressively turned out" (28).

Obi struggles to discover his place in the new Nigeria, while the sojourners have no problem moving in and out of the so-called modern and traditional spaces. Unlike Obi, they have no illusion about their sense of history because they carry their traditions with them. But they also can look at both cultures at once, celebrating certain forms of cosmopolitanism while displaying an awareness of local values they are still indebted to. Joseph, Obi's homeboy, takes pride in Obi's dramatic arrival at a UPU meeting in a new car, but he will not countenance Obi's marriage to Clara. My point is that local cosmopolitans are adept at exploiting symbols of modernity to fuel their own local projects. When members of the UPU demand that Obi carry himself in ways akin to mimicry, it is because they see in these colonial values a form of local cosmopolitan styling rather than a poor parody of the real thing.

The sojourners signal a cosmopolitan style that may not always indicate international mobility, but it suggests an interaction,



“a cultural dynamic of reaching out to and signifying affinity with an ‘outside,’ a world beyond the ‘local’” (Newell 110). These people’s awareness of modernity is anchored in signs they know and can control and in the possibility of mobility between modern and traditional spaces. This is best captured in the analogy that an old man draws, during Obi’s homecoming ceremony, between his travel abroad and the journey to the spirit world, thus using the local grammar to frame new experience, despite his awareness that, unlike in the time of Obi’s grandfather, “[g]reatness is now in the things of the white man” (49). Travelers are seen here as the harbinger of change, but they are only useful to the extent that they return to engage meaningfully with the stay-at-homes—the autochthons. This is the bridge that Obi fails to cross—hence his restlessness in Umuofia and among his people

in Lagos. If Obi returns to a vague construct called Nigeria, the sojourners return to a known place called Umuofia, and it is in the trafficking between Umuofia and Lagos that their local cosmopolitanism is enacted.

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## Chinua Achebe’s Ecocritical Awareness

ELAINE SAVORY

We mourn Chinua Achebe, a great writer and an extraordinary person. Hardly noticed, however, has been his insightful and important representation of Igbo culture and modern Nigeria in ecological terms. As we mourn him, those of us who think about ecology are anxious that human beings might one day have to mourn the loss of prime habitat, perhaps even the whole earth as habitable space. Achebe profoundly understood the consequences of losing a sense of balance between people and their environment long before environmental concerns became a movement and a consciousness.

Igbo culture entered modernity abruptly with the arrival of British colonists bent on

profiting financially from the land and people they could dominate. The empire was a thriving business proposition. They traveled with the Bible, source of the story of Eden, and with English literature, which included a strong strain of the pastoral (from Theocritus on, an urban desire for delightful respite in rural places). Achebe not only critiqued empire (while being honest about what it brought, such as a particular kind of education, which he appreciated) but also resisted the pastoral. Nature for his traditional Igbo characters is not a simply delightful and beautiful frame for human life but a series of challenges. The earth goddess, Ala, has to be invoked often, along with the ancestors (Afigbo 163): death may

be just a doorway to ancestral prominence for those who do right in life, but the power of the ancestors is a reminder that ultimately the worlds of the human and nonhuman, living and dead, must cooperate for the best outcome. Underlying Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) is a sense that respecting the power of an environment that is complex and not always amenable is likely to produce the best outcome. Achebe establishes a closeness between the earth and people through imagery, as when Okonkwo in exile is imaged as “cast out of his clan like a fish to a dry, sandy beach” (*Things* 92). But, as this example demonstrates, nature is not necessarily friendly. Villagers understand that the rhythms of life and death are harsh, whether because they have to kill animals for food or leave a sick person in the bush to die. Nature is not always a willing partner with human life and never a subordinate. Balance, as Achebe demonstrates, was a key principle in traditional Igbo culture, clearly beginning with self-regulation. Igbo tradition was centrally concerned with the complex and perpetually thoughtful relation between people and their environment.

Powerful people are linked to powerful natural events, as when Okonkwo is compared to a “bush-fire in the harmattan” (3). His power comes from working hard to engage nature in the production of food; by contrast, Unoka, Okonkwo’s father, is a hopeless romantic about all seasons and natural events: he ends up a failure. This is no Eden where fruit falls from trees (despite European colonial assumptions that tropical life required no effort). The villagers exile Okonkwo, raze his compound, and kill his animals to cleanse the land, “which Okonkwo had polluted with the blood of a clansman” (87). Expiation involves driving the polluter away so that Ala’s land can be pure again. But working with the laws (and vicissitudes) of nature is hard for some. In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu, frustrated in some ways by the lim-

its of his role as important priest, is tempted to refuse to name the day for the festival of harvest. If he does this, he will go against all precedent, failing to observe proper balance (5). Christian intervention in Igbo society, with its call to demonize and eradicate snakes, including the royal python sacred in Igbo culture, will not only provide outlets for those who resist traditional cultural norms but also open the door to depredation of the environment. By the time Okonkwo’s grandson Obi returns from England after four years, Nigerian food is not served in “decent” restaurants but is only prepared by servants at home (*No Longer* 34), and though one of the elders still reaches for a traditional proverb about nature to express an idea, it is clear that Igbo traditions are under serious threat from the incursion of European ways of doing things. Obi’s parents represent a cultural division, as his father reverently preserves writing and his mother, reflecting Igbo respect for food and the earth’s other resources, hoards old cocoyams, preserved kola nuts, and palm ash (126–27). Igbo knowledge of local foods is threatened by modernity, and this change is a metonym for the threat to Igbo culture.

Achebe’s memoir about Biafra includes evidence that the European desire to protect access to oil informed national actions in the conflict (*There* 99–100). The repercussions of Shell’s oil drilling in the Niger Delta since then are clear. Achebe opens the book with an Igbo proverb: “a man who does not know where the rain began to beat him cannot say where he dried his body” (1). As in his fiction, in this personal history of the Biafran conflict there is a powerful subtext of reference to the environment, for as history evolves, nature has become a resource for those with power, not a powerful entity with whom it is wise to cooperate. In sourcing the conflict in colonial history, Achebe notes that the British “knew the value of their colonies” in terms of “oil, coal, tin, columbite, cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts, and rubber” and, as important,



“immense human resources and intellectual capital” (47). Here is plain evidence that Achebe linked the exploitation of people and land in colonization in the way postcolonial ecological critics do. His poem “1966” images the penetration of the earth in the search for raw materials, and in this poem God’s “first / disappointment in Eden” is complexly connected to both colonial technological vandalism and the Eden proffered to Igbo converts as a primary sense of nature (undamaged nature has to be left because of humanity’s imperfection [62]). In “Biafra, 1969,” nature (in this case, foreign white power) becomes predatory, when “[v]oracious white ants” set upon Biafra (141). In “Mango Seedling,” a plantling tries to live in harsh conditions and fails, despite the poet’s attempts to mythologize it and make it an emblem of survival (186–87). The poem is tellingly placed in the account of the war just after the knowledge of Christopher Okigbo’s death and just before the fall of Enugu. Achebe clearly had no romantic notion that nature would aid the Igbos. As Biafra is about to be defeated, the harmattan is “particularly harsh” on a people already weakened by war and lack of food (222). “After a War” employs the image of “normalcy like / vines entwining a hollow twig; its famished roots / close on rubble and every / piece of broken glass” (254). Life must grow on disaster somehow.

In *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Beatrice thinks about the British exclusion of domestic animals from areas near the homes of colonial officials (except for dogs), but lying in bed she enjoys a bird’s song she remembers from her childhood. She has potted plants (the equivalent of domesticated animals) on her veranda. But she is captivated by something about this particular wild bird, whose song was rendered in English by her mother, a local bird’s sounds given a colonial framing (98–100). Nature is the same after colonialism but is not perceived in the same way: in this example wildness is still there, but Beatrice wonders why she has not really listened to the

bird before even though she has known its song for so long.

Achebe described his own experience as framed by recurrent loss. In a vivid image he compares himself to Moses, for his Igbo culture abandoned him “at the hour of her defeat” in “a basket of reeds” yet nursed him “in the alien palace” (*Education* 5). Though he was never dishonest about the value of his colonial education or about the complex place in which he found himself as a writer, his work always reminds us that it is at our peril that we ignore or simply exploit the natural world on which we depend, for now we all, as Achebe said about modern African writers, “have brought home ant-ridden faggots and must be ready for the visit of lizards” (*Morning* 46). His image of a butterfly broken on a windshield elaborates on his equation that all extremes (power, speed, even weight) are violence (*There* 73). But nature has its ways of fighting back, as when Achebe’s wife, Christie, is stung by a centipede while they are refugees from the violence of the war.

Reading Chinua Achebe’s work through the lens of postcolonial ecocriticism makes clear that he chose to represent both his Igbo inheritance and colonial-Christian intrusions without repeating the self-deceptions of the pastoral and romantic belief in the goodness of nature or turning traditional Igbo culture into a kind of lost Eden or simply demonizing modernity. Achebe presciently understood the importance of balance in human and natural ecology.

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## little-known documents

I Am  
Hemingway's Renata

## Introduction

ADRIANA IVANCICH

TRANSLATION AND  
INTRODUCTION BY MARK CIRINO

WHEN ADRIANA IVANCICH IS MENTIONED AS A FIGURE IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S LIFE, IT IS USUALLY WITH DERISION, INCREDULITY, OR ELSE A barely constrained "Did they or didn't they?" breathlessness. The idea that Ivancich, who was not even born when Hemingway wrote *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), was the inspiration behind the teenage contessa Renata, Colonel Cantwell's improbable love interest in *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), has generated a sometimes hostile reaction. However, this crucial figure in Hemingway's post-World War II life and writing deserves investigation. To the extent that she has been a blind spot in scholarly circles, the oversight can be attributed to a language gap. Her letters to Hemingway, her memoirs, her brother's memoirs, and much of the important analysis of Hemingway's involvement with the Veneto are written in Italian.

Ivancich's revelatory article "La Renata di Hemingway sono io" ("I Am Hemingway's Renata") was likewise written in Italian. Appearing in *Epoca* magazine in July 1965, Ivancich's frank statement about her association with Hemingway was meant to coincide with the Italian publication of *Across the River and into the Trees*. In this article—whose lurid and misleading title might as well be "I Was a Teenage Hemingway Heroine!"—Ivancich describes meeting Hemingway in Italy in the winter of 1948; being a member of Hemingway's hunting party the following day; the unlikely but organic development of their friendship; the way she inspired Hemingway's writing, which had slipped into a lengthy period of torpor; the growth of her own artistic aims, including her design of the cover of *Across the River and into the Trees*; visiting the Hemingways in the early 1950s in Cuba, where she and Hemingway developed their secret society, the White Tower Incorporated, which would later provide the title for her memoirs, *La torre bianca* (1980).

Following Hemingway's suicide on 2 July 1961, the early to mid 1960s was a phase of heightened interest in Hemingway's life, including focus on the publication of his Paris memoirs, *A Moveable Feast*, in December 1964, just months before Ivancich's *Epoca* article appeared. Furthermore,

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the notorious *Across the River and into the Trees*, widely lambasted by the English-speaking press, was not published in Italy until February 1965, because Hemingway believed the material was too sensitive and autobiographical to be published in Italian during his lifetime.

This article, published here for the first time in English, subverts the accusations that Ivancich was a Hemingway groupie, a parasite, obsessed with self-advancement and fame. One of Hemingway's biographers, Kenneth Lynn, charges, for example, that Ivancich insinuated herself into Hemingway's life "as a means of restoring her family's declining fortunes and fulfilling her dream of hobnobbing with glamorous people" (535). In fact, the key to their relationship seems to be that, for whatever reason, Hemingway's waning creative energies were reinvigorated by Ivancich's presence around him in the Veneto and later in Cuba. He wrote better when she was in his proximity than when she was not, and certainly more prolifically. The White Tower Incorporated was founded on Hemingway and Ivancich's mutual determination

to be creatively productive and to maintain an admirable work ethic. Although *Across the River and into the Trees* has been discarded as an artistic flop, the fact remains that before it appeared Hemingway had not published a novel since *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a full decade earlier (1940). In the twenty-one years between the publication of *A Farewell to Arms* and *Across the River and into the Trees*, he wrote two novels: *To Have and Have Not* (1937) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Hemingway was inspired to write, to chronicle his infatuation with this much younger woman. As Ivancich explains in this article, Hemingway told her that in addition to *Across the River* he wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) for her. Unpublished letters from Hemingway to Ivancich and to his other contemporaries substantiate her claims.

As the Cambridge edition of the Hemingway letters continues its massive output of previously unpublished correspondence over the next decade, Ivancich's role in Hemingway's life and career will be reevaluated; her article is a good place to start. Hemingway, for his part, relished the notion that

the world saw their friendship as silly; it allowed him to make one of his characteristic "us versus them" arguments. The surface silliness of the friendship emerges in Ivancich's article, when she anticipates the question that many asked in the late 1940s and have been asking since: what did Hemingway see in that young girl? "I Am Hemingway's Renata" goes a long way toward an explanation.

## NOTE

For various kindnesses, I'd like to thank Carlo and Nicola Rex, Carol and Alex Elias, Roger Pieroni, Laura Summers, Christopher Matson, and Antonio Cirino.

## WORK CITED

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FIG. 1

Adriana Ivancich, self-portrait in a bathroom mirror, 1954. Ernest Hemingway Collection. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston.





## I Am Hemingway's Renata

ONE WINTER AFTERNOON IN 1949, STANDING at the Latisana-Udine crossroads, I was waiting for the car to arrive.<sup>1</sup> But, for the moment, only the rain had arrived, a sharp and insistent rain.<sup>2</sup> When my Veneto friends, who had invited me to hunt in the *valle*, told me that Hemingway and his wife Mary would also be there, I was not overly excited.<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, I was not excited at all. Since I had grown up during wartime, when foreign authors, above all the Anglo-Saxons, were banned,<sup>4</sup> Ovid and Plato and D'Annunzio were still fresh in my mind, but I had never read Hemingway.<sup>5</sup> So I didn't give this extraordinary encounter another thought while I waited for them to come get me. I waited a long time. With every car that came near a new hope rose in me, immediately dashed by a spray of water and mud. But I had promised that they would find me there, at the Latisana-Udine crossroads.

When I saw a car slow down, I did not approach: certainly my friends could not be in that big blue Buick.<sup>6</sup> Someone stuck out a hand and I watched through the rain: who knows who these Americans are looking for, I thought. But then I heard my name shouted, and finally I understood that they were searching for me. When I was seated in the Buick they asked me, "You didn't recognize us, right?" "Not at all, with this car: where did you find it?" "It's his," they told me, and added, "Adriana, this is Hemingway." Only then did I notice that big man with the slightly gray hair who, seated in the front, had turned around to look at me. "I'm sorry, Adriana, for this delay. It was my fault," he said with a smile.<sup>7</sup>

The next morning, it was still raining when they woke me up at four o'clock. We found ourselves in a small, old-fashioned farmhouse. We had to dress in a hurry, go out to the swamp, and squeeze ourselves into the hollow

barrels or hide in the boats, among the reeds.<sup>8</sup> I forgot about sleep and fatigue when, against a dark sky, I saw the boats slip in silence over the still water in the canal, and the dogs, shadows in the night, and the fading stars.

My barrel was some distance from that of one of my hunting companions, on a tiny island, and, while the water of the lagoon was gaining color in the new light, suddenly there was a rustle of wings, a brown cloud, a shot. I saw a splintering flight, a brief spasm breaking the ascent, a muted fall in the water . . . and for an instant I thought that death had also come for me. Somewhere, in the *valle*, Hemingway was also there. We continued to hunt for many more hours.

Then, the grand return. From the reeds, from the tall grass, from the boats, one after the other the hunters, the dogs, the gamekeeper left and flowed in a single, slow stream toward the country house. In the great wine cellar, while the fire crackled ever stronger in the chimney and the wine descended into our veins, suddenly everyone had only extraordinary, heroic experiences to recount. I came to suspect that the presence of our exceptional guest stimulated everyone's fantasy. Hemingway also told stories, but from our duck hunt he went on to talk about Africa, Spain, and Cuba. Annoyed by my long hair, which, messed up by all those hours of rain, continued to fall across my forehead, I asked for a comb.<sup>9</sup> No one heard me. I asked again. Suddenly Hemingway's massive figure appeared next to me. He dug a hand in his pocket, took out his bone comb, broke it in two, and gave me half.<sup>10</sup>

We began to talk. For a long time. When we said goodbye to each other he asked to see me the next day. Another day followed, and then others still. At first it bored me a little to be with this man, so much older and more

experienced than I, who spoke slowly and whom I was not always able to understand. But I felt that he was pleased to have me near and to talk and talk.

When I arrived he broke into a smile and, a little awkwardly, swung onto his legs like a great bear. He was not interested in meeting new people, but he welcomed my young friends cordially. It was fun for him to impress them with stories of hunting and war; then suddenly the subtle humor of a comment would leave us perplexed for a moment. Then we would begin to laugh, and he would laugh too, first with a slightly embarrassed smile, then with greater and greater abandon, more freely than anyone else.

As time passed, the great bear with the slightly tired smile transformed, and, through our youth, he also became young. He invited us often to Torcello; he would reserve a table for us in a café or on the terrace of the Gritti.<sup>11</sup> Sometimes the two of us walked alone through the alleys to discover a hidden Venice.

One evening, I remember, he wanted to explain to us how to perform a corrida. He had invited Princess Aspasia of Greece and some of our friends to Ciro's.<sup>12</sup> After dinner he cleared the table, took the tablecloth, and said to his wife Mary, "You are the bull." Right in the middle of the room he began to fight the bull; "Aha, aha, toro," we shouted, clapping our hands. He seemed like a real torero. His face was also transformed, serious, intense. Around us the waiters watched us a little bit bewildered while, seated in the corner, Aspasia observed the scene with a kind and understanding smile. Then "Mr. Papa," as if after a great effort, smoothed his brow with a hand and, taking a carnation from a nearby table, offered Mary the flower: "Bravo toro," he said with a smile, "Here is the *medaglia al valore militare*."<sup>13</sup>

Mary, a little blonde woman, was always smiling; Hemingway's affectionate and watchful companion. I did not suspect that in the beginning she was a little worried about

me. She told me so, one day. She told me that, perplexed about the interest that Papa showed in me, she asked herself which attitude she would have to take; at a certain point, however, she understood that I was not seeking second-hand fame, that my affection for Papa would not transform itself into love, that not only did I not represent a danger, but I was on the contrary a help.

How I could be a help for Hemingway, I so unimportant and he so great, I only understood much later. Hemingway told me that he had not been well after his head wound and was no longer writing successfully.<sup>14</sup> His last book, *Across the River and into the Trees*, lay incomplete. But, after he met me, a new energy passed through me and entered him: "You made it possible for me to write again and I will be grateful to you always," he told me. "I could finish my book, and I gave the protagonist your face. Now I will write another book for you, and it will be my most beautiful book. It will speak of an old man and the sea."

I was happy to have been of help. I did not ask him about the story or the woman. Nor did he tell me anything. We were, after all, so busy speaking of other things: he told me about his health, of his sons, of Africa, of Cuba, and of his experiences; I of my poetry, which I had begun to write when I was fourteen years old and of those many other little things that formed my world at that moment.<sup>15</sup>

I did not read the book, but I knew that the story took place in Venice. When one day Hemingway and Mary came to breakfast with us—on those occasions he dressed all in blue and even put on a necktie—I told him that I had a surprise for him. Arranged on the shelf of my library I had prepared the drawings for the cover of *Across the River* [fig. 2].<sup>16</sup> I did it for him, for fun, without a clear purpose. I did almost nothing with a clear purpose in those days. I was surprised when he asked to take them. "What are you going to do with them?" I asked him. "That is my surprise," he smiled at me.



I was in Paris to study French, the guest of my friend Monique de Beaumont,<sup>17</sup> having forgotten about the drawings, when the Hemingways arrived. They invited me to breakfast at the Ritz.<sup>18</sup> "I showed your design to Charlie Scribner," Papa told me immediately. "And who is Charlie Scribner?" I asked him. "My American editor. He liked them, too. I told him that they were by a woman and he did not believe me. I invited him to breakfast with us. Here, he has arrived. You don't have to say anything. And so, Charlie, the covers?" he asked Scribner after he introduced us. "I have already said they are good. I have already said that I would like to speak about them with the artist." "Speak, then. The artist is there." "Ha ha," laughed Charlie Scribner. "Ha ha," I laughed, nervously. "Ha ha," laughed Papa. And he added, "But it really is her." Charlie first watched Hemingway, then me, and said, "The designs are strong and also the colors are not the colors that women usually use." "You see, *partner*?"<sup>19</sup> laughed Mr. Papa, advancing me in rank. "You have won. Alone . . ."

When the American edition of *Across the River* came out, in 1950, I was traveling with my mother to Cuba. My brother Gianfranco had already been working for some years in Havana, and we wanted to see him again.<sup>20</sup> It was also an occasion to meet up again with Mary and Papa, who had repeatedly invited us to their house. It was in Tenerife that, in a bookstore window, I first saw my cover.<sup>21</sup> I was emotional, of course, but I did not buy *Across the River* because I knew that Papa would give it to me as a gift.

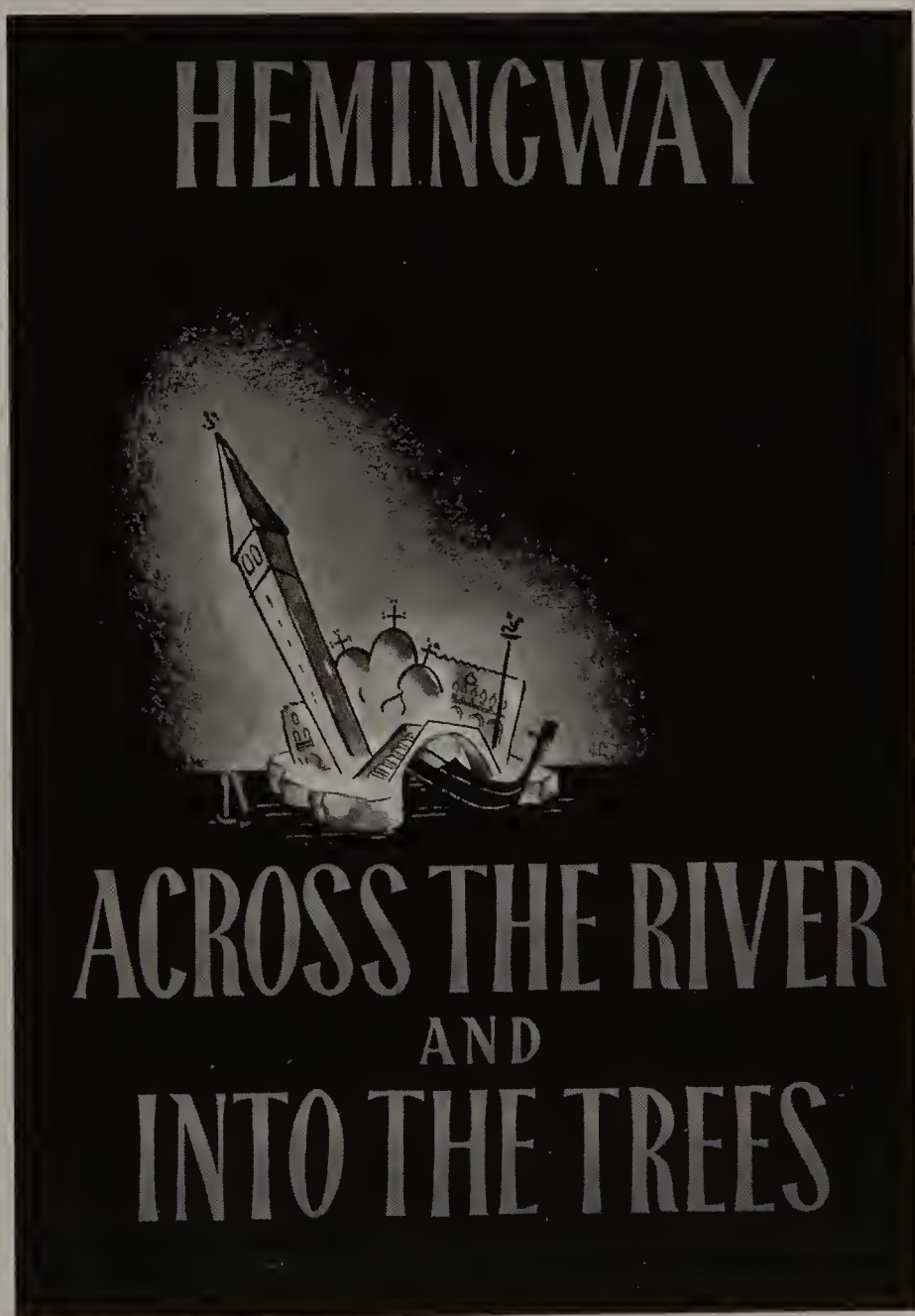
Cuba.<sup>22</sup> Here is the coast, all rocks and palms, cliffs on the water; here the profile of the Morro guard-

ing the port;<sup>23</sup> here a motorboat approaching quickly—is it them, is it actually them?—and the siren of salute and three white handkerchiefs against the blue of the sky. The *Pilar* circles the ship one, two times, always closer, and here are my brother Gianfranco, and Mary, and the voice of Papa through a megaphone: "Cuba greets you! We'll see each other at the port," and the *Pilar* darts away.

Havana. The sharp odor of the black skin of the natives, a cheerful confusion of cars and men, the long street among trees in bloom and the small wooden houses. Then,

FIG. 2

Dust jacket of first American edition (Scribner, 1950).



the Finca Vigía, the Hemingways' house. Five years later, Papa wrote me, "31 March 1955 . . . I come back now from my evening walk around the Finca, the pink sky above the hills of the village, Havana sparkling in the lavender haze, our great tree that last week exploded in a new foliage all gold and pink and copper and now is an immense umbrella of soft green, the rubber tree near your *Casita* in bloom in a new splendor of buds, the pool fresh and limpid with a crown of spring flowers in full bloom, the music that reaches us from the village. It is all so beautiful—or it seems so to me—that it makes me feel more alone, makes me desire to be able to move our slow and lazy bodies as fast as our thoughts, makes me desire your presence here. We can speak of the influence that the beauty and the ambience have on the character. . . ." <sup>24</sup>

My mother and I lived in the *Casita*, about fifty meters from the Finca Vigía. There were a lot of trees; there were orchids that grew freely. And there was the Tower.

The Tower rose at about a meter from the house, very white against the sky. On the first floor were the Hemingways' forty cats, on the second Papa wrote, on the third I painted and drew. Once in a while Papa came up to read me some pages from the new book, *The Old Man and the Sea*; once in a while I went down to show him the drawings. Once in a while—not often, out of mutual respect for our work.

Papa wrote with a typewriter. Standing up. The typewriter was on a pile of books, on a table. He would back up a couple of steps, to think, then advance again and beat out one sentence, two sentences at the most. Through the glass door I watched him move forward and back, as a painter does before his painting, and from the expression on his face I knew whether I could interrupt or not.

One day, opening the door of the car, which was already started, the chauffeur behind the wheel, Hemingway said to me, "You have to do me a big favor: come with me to Cojimar." As it happened, that same day I had

a date with a Cuban boy with whom I had fallen in love,<sup>25</sup> but I immediately sensed that it was important to Papa that I go to Cojimar with him that very day, so I got in the car. As we crossed the soft hills of Cuba I asked him what I would do in Cojimar. "Nothing," he responded. "You only have to watch the ocean with me. I need to watch the ocean with you." Suddenly I knew that I was about to live a very important moment.

It has begun to drizzle, in the little bay of Cojimar. The wind ruffles the palms that look up, still seeking the sun. In silence we watch the endless blue of the sea that joins the blue of the sky, the black vultures on the rocks in savage disarray, fishermen bent on the nets. And, all of a sudden, the wind is also silent. Papa rises up. How much time has passed? It does not matter; nothing seems to have more importance than the ocean. He stands up and says, "Thank you . . ." His eyes are bright with tears. Mine are also bright. Without speaking we return to the house.<sup>26</sup>

In a letter dated 12 April 1952, speaking of *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway wrote me, "Once I finished it, I was aware that instead of a single book on the sea (so heavy that no one could lift it) I made at least four. This will makes things easier. All the editors, etc., that read *The Old Man and the Sea* consider it to be a classic. (It could seem like bragging. But it isn't, because I am not saying it. It is just that they say it. They say that it has a strange effect on whoever reads it and that it is always a different effect. Even those who do not love me, probably with good reason, and who do not love what I write say so). If all of this is true, then I want to say that I have done that which in all my life I have sought to learn to do, and it is lucky and we must be happy. But I have to forget all this and I have to see if I can do better. . . ." <sup>27</sup>

He had decided that we worked well together, that we were *true old partners*,<sup>28</sup> and that year in Cuba *The White Tower Incorpora-*



tion was founded.<sup>29</sup> From then on, in his letters he often wrote “WTI” near his signature.

Papa and I were the “founding partners.” The “honorary partners” were Mary, who had been an able journalist; my brother, Gianfranco, who wrote a war story; the forty cats, because they were established residents of the tower; and Black Dog,<sup>30</sup> the dog, out of sympathy. The “normal partners” were Gary Cooper, because he was a friend and also to repay him for the fact that, tied with eleven pigeons each, Papa and I beat him in a shooting match,<sup>31</sup> and Marlene Dietrich and Ingrid Bergman, because, as Papa, who knew them well, said, they were “great women.” Obligations: to be nice and—excepting only the cats and Black Dog—creative and artistic; to help one another if necessary. Some partners, mainly those far away, were never made aware of their election. Later we added “simple partners.” One was Don Andr  s, the Spanish priest who used to come to breakfast at the Finca Vig  a every Thursday, and of whom it was said that during the week he would hardly eat in order to give all his food to the poor. Another was *El Monstruo* [“the monster”], who was actually named [Roberto] Herrera, was helpful and good, and had nothing monstrous about him, but one time Papa called him that for a joke and the name stuck.<sup>32</sup> *El Monstruo* helped Papa with small problems: he defended him from visitors (every American who passed through Havana felt the need to telephone the Finca); he replenished the checks that, every first of the month, Hemingway signed and sent to charitable organizations; and he filled in the tax forms. A third simple partner was Sinsky, the Basque sailor. When his ship stopped at Havana—which happened often enough—the whole Finca was filled with his overpowering voice. After breakfast, Sinsky would rise and stand to his full bony height and begin to sing *Sardi  itas*, the Basque song that Papa liked, and we all followed him in chorus.<sup>33</sup> Finally there was Gregorio, the caretaker of the *Pi-*

*lar*, with a face worn from the sun, with his peaceful smile and his simple wisdom.<sup>34</sup>

We, the “founding partners,” only worked in the morning. I only drew, but some images of Cuba—the cockfight, the fish in the ocean, the bay of Cojimar—would be transformed much later into poetry.<sup>35</sup> A year before Mondadori published my book, *Ho guardato il cielo e la terra* [1953; “I Watched the Sky and the Land”],<sup>36</sup> Hemingway wrote me: “The poems are very good. Because I am not a critic, I cannot tell you why they are good. But I believe that they are, all of them. You are a young woman with a great talent, still unrefined. You can do anything you want, and you must want only the best. . . .” The letter is dated 1 October 1952.

We worked only in the morning, as I said, and when I finished before him, I went onto the tower’s rooftop terrace, where Mary took in the sun. Then we would all go into the pool, or to the pigeon shoot, or offshore to fish on the *Pilar*. Often I would go down to Havana to meet my new friends or the guy I was in love with. There was always enough to do; almost two months had gone by and I had not yet read *Across the River*.

When I finally read it, I told Papa right away that I did not find the dialogue very interesting. How could Renata—no, any girl with that education and traditional family, and so young—slip away to amorous encounters and to swallow one Martini after another as if they were cherries.<sup>37</sup> No, she was full of contradictions; she was not real. “You are too different from her to understand,” Hemingway defended himself, “but I assure you that such girls do exist. And Renata is not only one woman but four different women, whom I have actually known.”

I did not ask more. Life in Havana continued for another month, serene, always filled, always new every day. Then someone sent my mother an article published in France.<sup>38</sup> Next to the name of Renata it made a veiled reference to my name. And everything was presented in a different, false light. I was sur-

prised, but I did not take it seriously or think of possible consequences. My mother, on the other hand, did what every other mother would do; she was very concerned and decided we had to return home immediately. The long vacation in Cuba was finished.<sup>39</sup>

One year later, in March 1951, I received this letter from the Finca Vigía: "If I am able to write well enough, they will speak of me and of you for many hundreds of years, because we have worked hard and well together. Some will think it, and only you and I will know, and we will be dead. Perhaps I never should have known you. Perhaps it would have been much better for you. Perhaps we never should have met in Latisana, beneath the rain. But thank heaven, I saw you before you were too wet. But, daughter, it would have been the same if I had never written a book about the Veneto. The people would have noticed that we were together and that we were happy together and we never spoke of serious things. People are jealous of those who are happy. And then they would have noticed that we worked together and that we were tremendously serious when we worked together and that we worked well. People are always jealous of those who are serious and who work well. Remember, daughter, that the best weapon against lies is the truth. There are no weapons against gossip. It is like the fog that the clear wind blows away and that the sun dissolves . . ." <sup>40</sup>

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. Ernest Hemingway and Adriana Ivancich actually met in December 1948 (e.g., Baker 469; Reynolds 186).

2. Hemingway recalls their meeting as "something that struck me like lightning at the cross roads in Latisana in the rain" (qtd. in Meyers 440).

3. The driver of the car was Adriana's friend Carlo Kechler, who invited her to hunt on the reserve of Nanuk Franchetti, a hunting companion of Hemingway's (Moriani 23). *Valle* describes the lagoon areas that are separated from the flow of the river.

4. Ivancich was born in Venice in 1930.

5. Hemingway's works were not published in Italy during its fascist era, and his books were not available there until the mid to late 1940s.

6. According to Moriani, Hemingway's car was "an impressive old Buick convertible in metallic blue which earned him the admiration of the locals and which children in Caorle called 'the car with the wings'" (21).

7. In her memoirs, Ivancich remembers Hemingway saying, "Terribly sorry, Adriana. It's all my fault. I hope you will forgive me" (*La torre* 9).

8. The barrels, submerged in the marsh, are the blinds in which the shooter stays, usually seated on a pail, during the hunt. This method of hunting is typical in the Veneto.

9. When Renata is introduced in *Across the River and into the Trees*, Cantwell notes "the carelessness the wind had made of her hair" (78).

10. In *Across the River and into the Trees*, Renata is also quite conscious of combing her hair, and she and Colonel Cantwell frequently refer to its resistance to the comb, its messiness, the attention it requires (104, 106–08, 113, 142, 167, 246). For a discussion of the importance of hair and combing in the novel, see Eby 231–32.

11. Torcello is a small island in the north of the Venetian lagoon. Hemingway stayed at the inn Locanda Cipriani in 1948, hunting and visiting Torcello's sites, which include the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. The cathedral and its squared tower are mentioned in *Across the River and into the Trees* (33, 35, 44, 63). Renata refers to Cantwell as a "Torcello boy" (151). For beautiful photographs of Hemingway's stay in Torcello, see Moriani 107–23. The Gritti Palace is the most famous and luxurious hotel in Venice. Hemingway stayed there during his 1948 and 1949 visits to Venice. He and his wife returned to the Gritti in March 1954, after their two African plane crashes.

12. Ciro's Bar was a hotspot of the time in Venice, located at XXII Marzo 2397. It is now the site of the restaurant La Caravella. Aspasia Manos (1896–1972), the mother of King Peter of Yugoslavia, died in Venice (Baker 481). In his posthumously published novel *Under Kilimanjaro* (2005), Hemingway demonstrates to a young African woman the manners of European royalty: "I had tried to teach her," he writes, "the lift of the wrist and undulation of the fingers with which the Princess Aspasia of Greece would greet me across the smoke-filled clamor of Harry's Bar in Venice" (377–78).

13. Hemingway received the *Medaglia d'Argento al Valore Militare* ("Silver Medal of Military Valor") in November 1921 (Meyers 61). In 1950 Hemingway claimed that this award was one of only two (along with the *Croce al Merito di Guerra* ["War Merit Cross"]) that he respected ("Hemingway").

14. Ivancich may be referring to one of multiple automobile accidents Hemingway had during World War II (Meyers 574).



15. Ivancich published a book of poems, *Ho guardato il cielo e la terra* ("I Watched the Sky and the Land"), with Mondadori in 1953. In *Across the River and into the Trees*, likewise, Renata had written poetry, which she disparages as "young girl poetry" (90). It was not uncommon for Ivancich to include her poetry in her letters to Hemingway.

16. A flap of the dust jacket for the first edition of *Across the River and into the Trees* gives the credit "JACKET DESIGN BY A. IVANCICH." The cover illustration features an unmistakably phallic white tower at an angle simulating an erect penis; at its base three tumescent hills sit above a tunnel that is being penetrated by a gondola.

17. De Beaumont (b. 1930) was the younger sister of Jacqueline de Ribes (b. 1929), a famous French socialite and designer.

18. This meeting took place in March 1950.

19. In the original, "partner" appears in English.

20. Gianfranco Ivancich (1920–2013) was the author of scholarship on Ezra Pound as well as memoirs of his own time spent with Hemingway, *Da una felice Cuba a Ketchum: I miei giorni con Ernest Hemingway* (2008; "From a Happy Cuba to Ketchum: My Days with Ernest Hemingway").

21. Tenerife is the most populous of the Canary Islands.

22. One of the eight sections of Ivancich's book is called "Vento di Cuba" ("Cuban Wind"). Ivancich and her mother arrived in Cuba in late October 1950.

23. Morro Castle is a sixteenth-century fortress at the entrance of Havana.

24. This letter matches the "nostalgic, almost elegiac tone" that Doyle and Houston find in Hemingway's letters to Ivancich ("Letters" 29). The letter, and all those from Hemingway to Ivancich quoted in this piece, is a translation of Ivancich's translation, not a transcription of Hemingway's original.

25. Juan Veranes, whom Mary Hemingway describes as "a young man of good family . . . who had taken her dancing several evenings" (281). Mary's autobiography refers to him as Juan Verano, and Denis Brian's oral biography of Hemingway refers to him as both Verano and Verona.

26. In a more famous anecdote, Hemingway told Adriana, after their meeting in Venice in early 1954, "Now you can tell everyone you have seen Ernest Hemingway cry" (qtd. in Kert 479). Ivancich ends her memoirs on this note (*La torre* 324).

27. In this same letter, Doyle and Houston report, Hemingway cites the death of his publisher, Charles Scribner, as negatively affecting his writing ("Ernest Hemingway's Letters" 26). Charles Scribner III had died two months earlier, on 11 February 1952.

28. In the original, "true old partners" appears in English.

29. In the original, "The White Tower Incorporation" appears in English, followed by its Italian translation, "Società della Torre bianca."

30. "Black Dog" appears in English in the original.

31. Cooper (1901–61) starred in film adaptations of *A Farewell to Arms* (1932) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943).

32. In Gianfranco's recollection, Herrera had "two protruding ears and a chin like in a Goya caricature" (Ivancich-Biaggini 222). Among the small tasks Hemingway assigned Herrera was to provide a daily word count for the handwritten *Across the River and into the Trees* manuscript.

33. Adriana may be referring to "Mi Sardinia," a song by the Portuguese artist Amália Rodrigues. A Hemingway friend describes Sinsky, whose real name was Juan Dunabeitia, as "a tall, thin Basque" (qtd. in Brian 229). Mary Hemingway recalls that he was called "Sinbad the Sailor" (200).

34. Adriana is referring to Gregorio Fuentes, often thought to be an inspiration behind Santiago, the protagonist of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

35. Adriana's poem "Cojimar" captures a timelessness: she writes of "The distant horizon / an ancient picture" and describes "ancient eyes full of salt" that "watch the sea." Her "I due galli" ("The Two Roosters") depicts a cockfight and the winner's "victory without glory."

36. No translation of this book has been published.

37. Adriana confirms this view fifteen years later, in an interview in *People* following the publication of her memoirs: "I didn't like the book and I told him so" (Di Robilant 43). See also *La torre* 144, where Ivancich expands on these criticisms.

38. Ivancich refers to an article in *Samedi-soir*, "Hemingway a laissé à Venise un 'mystère Renata'" ("Hemingway Left a 'Renata Mystery' in Venice"), which speculates about her relationship with Hemingway and how she might have inspired him to create the protagonist of *Across the River and into the Trees*. This anonymous article, which appeared in January 1951, denounces rumors of Hemingway's improper relationship with Adriana as scurrilous, while perpetuating them in exaggerated detail. *Samedi-soir* was not the first periodical in Europe to report suggestions about their relationship and its influence on Hemingway's writing. An article published several months earlier in the Italian periodical *Europeo*, entitled "Afdere più Adriana uguale: Renata" ("Afdere plus Adriana Equals Renata"), claims that Renata is a composite of Ivancich and Nanuk Franchetti's sister, Afdere (the future wife of Henry Fonda).

39. The Ivanciches left Hemingway's house in late January 1951. Hence, Adriana's comment in the next sentence that his letter of March 1951 followed a year later is inaccurate.

40. Doyle and Houston characterize this letter as Hemingway's attempt to align himself with Adriana against a world that does not understand the value of their relationship ("Ernest Hemingway's Letters" 24–25).

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## Playbill for George Lippard's *The Quaker City*

### Introduction

ON 11 NOVEMBER 1844, A MOB GATHERED OUTSIDE PHILADELPHIA'S CHESNUT STREET THEATRE FOR, IN THE WORDS OF THE THEATER'S MANAGER, Francis Wemyss, the purpose "of a grand row" (395). The crowd intended to prevent the opening of *The Quaker City; or, The Monks of Monk Hall*, a play George Lippard had adapted from the work he was simultaneously publishing serially; it would become the best-selling novel of the first half of the nineteenth century. Capitalizing on a sensational 1843 murder case that fascinated Philadelphians, the novel retold the story of Singleton Mercer, a Philadelphia clerk acquitted of killing his sister's seducer. Infuriated by the playbill, Mercer attempted to purchase two hundred tickets for his supporters, who threatened to destroy the theater (Durang 247). Wemyss wanted Mercer jailed, but the mayor, wary of "riot and bloodshed," countered, "I really think you have struck the first blow in your playbill" and called for the play's cancellation (qtd. in Wemyss 319–20). As the crowd of irate Philadelphians gathered, Lippard strode through it draped in an "ample cloak and carrying a sword-cane to repel assaults" (Bouton 20). Facing the very real prospect of violence, Wemyss reluctantly canceled the production.

The scene has fascinated literary, theater, and cultural scholars alike, though, until this rare artifact recently resurfaced, evidence related to the play's cancellation has been limited to a handful of contemporaneous accounts. Playbills from this period, printed on thin sheets of rag or paper and designed to be covered over almost daily, were nearly as ephemeral as the performances they heralded. Few are extant. The rediscovered playbill's tattered condition attests such artifacts' fragility, and its archival presence—a rare copy, filed in a different theater's box in the archive—suggests the tenuous existence of those that have survived. That it announces a play that was never performed further distinguishes it, given the generally conservative approach of theater managers, who typically operated on the edge of bankruptcy and could ill afford to advertise performances that might be canceled. The playbill is as valuable as it is rare, offering a window onto the development of the best-selling American novel before 1852 and shedding

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light on the relationship between popular authors and the theater.

The confrontation sparked by the playbill vividly illustrates the lively, sometimes volatile nature of mid-nineteenth-century American theater and the potential perils of staging current events. While the theater was still dominated by adapted European plays, audiences and critics called for the cultivation of a “native” drama. Lippard was the most successful novelist to respond to this call before the 1856 copyright law that first guaranteed authors the rights of representation.<sup>1</sup> Americans may have desired native productions, but staging current events had its risks. Shuffling rapidly through little-rehearsed shows that featured frequent actor-spectator interaction, ad-libbed lines, and a raucous, heterogeneous audience, antebellum theater could be a precarious enterprise. Nevertheless, locked in a fierce competition with the other two established Philadelphia theaters, Wemyss sought to expand the Chesnut’s audience by appealing to working-class theatergoers. Thus, he invested heavily in Lippard’s topical *The Quaker City*, while also reducing ticket prices and admitting African Americans to the gallery (Durham 198). Neither Wemyss nor Lippard anticipated the fierce opposition the collaboration would provoke or its ramifications. Several months later, under the weight of his expenditures on the play’s scenery and repeated attacks in the penny paper *Spirit of the Times*, Wemyss’s management collapsed. Lippard learned that the stage was not an effective vehicle for his politics—a lesson that changed the course of his novel and expanded the scope of an incensed Lippard’s political critiques.

Following the Chesnut Street scene, as the playbill reveals, Lippard altered his plot to shift the focus from individual vice to systemic political corruption. In a sarcastic footnote, Lippard implores his readers not to be “deceived” by a seeming “anti-Philadelphia tirade”: “Churches have *never* been burned in Philadelphia. Nor halls fired . . . nor school houses, given up to a mob. . . . The play of an author, who dared speak out for the truth, has never been *ukase*-d in this



city. Never. A contemptible coalition of charlatans, have never resorted to threats of assassination in order to put down a work, which held them up to public scorn. Never, never!" (206). In addition to serving as an outlet for Lippard's frustration over mayoral meddling, this outburst heralds more radical changes to the novel. Whereas in the novel's early installments Lippard had contented himself with stock representations of corruption—venal newsman, reverend rake, profiteering bank director—the post-riot novel engages in large-scale political critique not suggested by the playbill as part of the original plot. This change is further indicated by Lippard's introduction of a German sorcerer who threatens to mesmerize the populace, a popish plot to control the nation, and, perhaps most important, a dystopian, futuristic nightmare of 1950s monarchical Philadelphia, dreamed by the character Devil-Bug (keeper of the den of sin Monk Hall).

This apocalyptic vision—with its shackled denizens, living dead, decimated structures, geysers of corpses, and ominous appearance of the phrase "Wo unto Sodom"—is unforgettable. Its importance is further demonstrated by the redesigned wrappers of the postplay serials, which feature two scenes involving Devil-Bug, one of which depicts his famous dream. With the introduction of Devil-Bug's dream, the novel's layout shifts suddenly from two columns to one, further demonstrating the singular importance of this passage. Yet while the completed novel invites readers to view Devil-Bug's dream as its crucial scene, it appears to have been added in reaction to the play's censoring (372).

Denied access to the theater, Lippard stages his political critique in the novel, and his use of explicitly theatrical language further connects Devil-Bug's dream to the play's cancellation. For example, Lippard ends his double-column section announcing, "The orchestra of hell strikes up its music, and the play goes on" (371). The dream, unlike the exposé that precedes it, portrays in vivid imagery the systemic, rather than individual, nature of Philadelphia's corruption. In the wake of the cancellation, Monk Hall and the Mercer case are no longer the primary focus of Lippard's vision. He explicates the threat to the republic when, on

"the anniversary of the death of Freedom," a king is crowned amid streams of white and black slaves and the rubble of Independence Hall (386). The antifreedom aristocracy of this apocalypse echoes the "contemptible coalition of charlatans" who had threatened Lippard's life and silenced his speech.

Notably, Lippard gives his spectacular political critique to the racially ambiguous Devil-Bug, whose "swarthy brow," "wide mouth," "flat nose," and German accent offer contradictory identity characteristics (105). Refusing to name Devil-Bug's origins and describing him as "a mass of hideous and distorted energy," Lippard's novel allows the reader to project a generalized racial anxiety onto Devil-Bug's body (105). The playbill, however, describes Devil-Bug as "a Negro"—a fact likely to startle twenty-first-century readers. If Lippard ever intended, as with the character of Fitz-Cowles, to reveal Devil-Bug's race at the novel's end, he never did. And if the playbill is a rough sketch of Lippard's pre-riot plans, Devil-Bug's character seems to have changed significantly after the theater incident. Through the dream and Devil-Bug's familial tenderness (toward a daughter, added after the theatrical debacle, for whom he cares a great deal), Lippard converts Devil-Bug from the playbill's "Negro, deeply dyed in crime" to a complex character embodying Lippard's political vision. For antebellum readers familiar with the canceled performance, *The Quaker City* offered one of the richest portrayals of black interiority by a white American novelist to date.

The recovered playbill prompts us to ask new questions about the relationship between the play and the novel: How might seeing or knowing about the playbill have changed contemporary readers' experience of the novel? What is the role of the theatrical in Lippard's fiction? What bearing does Lippard's relationship to the theater have on that of other politically engaged American novelists of the time, like Ned Buntline and Harriet Beecher Stowe?<sup>2</sup> The questions raised by this little-known document abound, and its recovery offers a rare opportunity to examine the rich nexus of literature, theater, politics, and public life.

## NOTES

We wish to thank James N. Green, Christopher Looby, David S. Reynolds, Michael Winship, and, especially, Daniel K. Richter and the McNeil Center for Early American Studies for their generous assistance with this piece.

1. Before 1856 United States copyright law only protected the rights of authors to replicate physical copies of their works. After a sustained effort by several playwrights and politicians, the law was amended in 1856 to allow playwrights to control performances of their dramas.

2. The anti-British sentiments expressed by Buntline, a prolific novelist, helped fuel tensions between supporters of the American tragedian Edwin Forrest and those of his British rival, William Charles Macready. In 1849 rioters gathered outside the Astor Place Opera House, where Macready was performing, and more than twenty people lost their lives; Buntline's role earned him a year of hard labor. Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which surpassed *The Quaker City*'s popularity, spawned a variety of dramatic adaptations. While some sought to stage Stowe's appeal to the sympathies of quiescent northerners, many more inflated her characters into gross caricatures that often worked against the author's political objectives. Stowe had little control over such adaptations, since copyright law did not secure for novelists the right to control dramatic adaptations of their works until 1870.

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**CHESTNUT STREET THEATRE.**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11th, 1844.**

**FIRST NIGHT OF**

**THE QUAKER CITY;**

OR THE

**MONKS OF MONK HALL!**

A ROMANCE OF

**LIFE, MYSTERY & CRIME,**

Dramatised by the Author, for this Theatre.

**CHARACTERS IN PART FIRST.**

Gus Lorrimer, a heartless Libertine.....Mr. Wemyss.  
Byrnwood, a Young Merchant of an Old Firm.. ..Mr. JAMISON.  
Livingston, a Merchant Prince of the Quaker City.....Mr. Matthews.  
Petriken, Proprietor and Publisher of the Ladies' Western Hemisphere,  
of two steel plates, and forty-eight pages each.....Mr. Brunton.  
Mr. Arlington, the father of Mary.....Mr. Stafford.  
The Astrologer, consulted by Every-body, laughed at by Every-body, a  
  Lover of the Science.....Mr. C. Smith.  
Mutchins, a pander to Lorrimer's views.....Mr. Dawes.  
Mrs. Arlington, an affectionate Old Lady.....Mrs. Durang.  
Mary, her daughter,.....Miss McBride.  
Luke Harvey, a consummate Scoundrel, who betrays every-body under the  
  guise of Friendship.....Mr. Sullivan.  
Somkey Chiffin, with no character at all... ..Mr. Neal.  
Black Waiter in the Oyster Cellar... ..Mr. Horn.

**SCENE FIRST.**

**AN OYSTER CELLAR.**

Mischief Proposed—The Pimp and the Pander. SCENE 2d—Parental Affection—The First False Step taken—Maiden Beware—An Aunt in the distance—A most convenient relation. SCENE 3d—STREET—Further developement—Monk Hall in Prospect—A visit to the Astrologer, and a Rake's code of morals—Enjoyment to the last.

**Scene 4th. THE ASTROLOGER'S HOUSE.**

Horoscopes of the Great—Strange Secrets—Prophetic Warning—Deist, or

"ON CHRISTMAS EVE,



## SCENE FIRST.

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Scene 4th. **THE ASTROLOGER'S HOUSE.**

Horoscopes of the Great—Strange Secrets—Prophetic Warning—Desist, or

"ON CHRISTMAS EVE,

AT THE HOUR OF SUNSET,

ONE OF YOU WILL DIE BY THE OTHER'S HAND!"

Scene 5th—**UNWELCOME TIDINGS!**

The Letter. Not the Same Letter.

*Loaded Pistols, and then for MONK HALL!*

## ACT SECOND.—NEW CHARACTERS.

Devil Bug, the Door-keeper of Monk Hall, a Negro, deeply dyed in crime... Mr. Jordan.  
Gloworm..... } His Satelites, } ..... Mr. Horn  
Musquito..... } ..... Mr. Richardson.  
Long Haired Bess, a Nymph of the Pave..... Mrs. Jordan.  
Madam Nancy, Proprietress of Monk Hall..... Mrs. Hautonville

**Scene 1. MONK HALL.**

Breakfast—The Dove Caged—How it was done—Remorse—Too Late—Forward is the Word—The Victim must be prepared for the Sacrifice—Fresh Arrivals. SCENE 2d—LOVE A MYSTERY—Promises—Pie-Crust made to be Broken—Love in a Cottage very Romantic—Sham Marriage, and its consequence.

Scene 3d—**The DELUDER and the DELUDED.**

A Day of Reckoning—Spare my Sister—A few Mysteries of Monk Hall developed.

The Trap.

The Poison.

The Charcoal.

**JUST RETRIBUTION.**

## ACT THIRD—NEW CHARACTERS.

Algerno..... only child of a Rich Mexican, the Rich Planter from the South, the English Lord, heir to a Barony, in one word, the Greatest Humbug in this Age of..... Mr. Mossop.  
Endymnion, his..... a Foot Boy, supposed to bear a strong Affinity to Rita..... Mr. Forrest.  
Von Gelt, the Forger, show me the Company you keep, I will tell you what you are..... Mr. Dawes.  
Buzby Poodle, the Editor of the Daily Black Mail, who will sell himself or friend to the highest bidder—a most accommodating person..... Mr. J. Sefton.

**Scene 1. MONK HALL. GUILT & ITS CONSEQUENCES**

The Seduced—The Lacer—and the Avenger—The First Step towards the Fulfilment of the Astrologer's Warning.

Scene 2d—**ROOM OF THE MILLIONAIRE,**

Up Four Pair of Stairs—Breakfast Extraordinary—Meeting of Creditors—Bills! Bills! nothing but Bills.

SCENE 3d. **HALL of an HOTEL.**

Grand Schemes for settling the claims of MR. THZCOWEL's Creditors—Gold Mines rejected—Bird in the Hand, considered



## SCENE 3d. **HALL of an HOTEL.**

Grand Scheme for settling the claims of Mr. Fitzcarrall's Creditors—Gold Mines rejected—Bird in the Hand, considered worth THREE in the Bush—Quarrel about the division of Spoils—General Row

**WHAT A WORLD WE LIVE IN!**

## Scene 4th—**A LADY'S BOUDOIR!**

Filch caused the fall of our first Parent Eve, then who can blame her Daughter—The Guilty Wife—perpetrates the Murder of her injured Husband—Crime and Cowardice generally Companions—Schemes overheard—Awkward appearance of an unexpected Visitor—The Sick Friend Dead.

### ACT FOURTH—NEW CHARACTERS.

Dora Livingston, the Guilty Wife..... Mrs. Knight.  
Rusty Jake, a Pardoned Individual, of the Loafer Genius, once a  
Murderer, now a Gentleman, with a Flash Song..... Mr. W. Chapman.  
Slippery Elm, a Pickpocket..... Mr. Smith | Pump Handle, a rioter.. Mr. Stafford.  
Dusty Bobert, an Ash Collector, with a shocking bad hat..... Mr. Horn.  
Loafers, Thieves, Pickpockets and Murderers.

## Scene 5th—**DEN OF MONK HALL.**

Strange Discussions—The Forger detected—Experience of Crime—The Governor wot wot Pardon, and the Governor wot will—The Den in an Uproar—Capture by the Police.

### Act 5th—Old Friends only on the Carpet!

## Scene 1st. **House of the Merchant Prince**

By no means the House of Happiness—All Discovered.

**POISON AND LOVE! RUIN AND CRIME! The CERTAIN Reward of Crime!**

## Scene 2d.—**ARLINGTON'S HOUSE.**

Return to her deserted home. Forgiveness. The Friend, the Seducer, and the Avenger.

### SCENE 3. **STREET.**

An Old Acquaintance in a new business, his old Den too hot to hold him. Coffins for two, rather a Serious Joke, but what we must all come to.

## Scene Last—**DECK OF A FERRY BOAT.**

Retribution. Farewell to the Quaker City. Yes, a last Farewell. Denouement. Sunset. Christmas Eve.

## **THE ASTROLOGER'S PREDICTION FULFILLED.**

**"ONE DIES BY THE OTHER'S HAND."**

In consequence of the length of the Drama, there will

**BE NO OTHER PIECE PERFORMED ON THE SAME EVENING.**

## Forum

### Enlarging “Palestine”

TO THE EDITOR:

“More than half the world is still ‘Palestine’ . . . oppressed, hidden, and subaltern,” I once wrote in a different context (*Hidden Histories: Palestine and the Eastern Mediterranean* [Pluto, 2010; print; 10–11]). I was therefore gratified to read “Cross-Colonial Poetics: *Souffles-Anfas* and the Figure of Palestine,” Olivia C. Harrison’s article on Palestine as a metaphor for political and aesthetic resistance in 1960s and 1970s Maghrebi literature (128.2 [2013]: 353–69). Harrison’s interpretations elicit additional observations, and suggestions for extending and updating the meanings of “Palestine.”

On “acculturation and linguistic assimilation,” the article draws parallels between French in Maghreb and Hebrew in Palestine as “hegemonic language[s]” (363). It seems necessary to make more distinctions between the two contexts in discussing “deculturation” and “cultural annihilation” (361) and to clarify what “Israeli efforts at acculturation” were supposed to be (363). Contrary to other colonial projects that exploited resources and imposed language, religion, and cultural values on the oppressed, Zionism aims to control the land but remove the native population, insinuating itself as a native culture instead. Hebraizing Palestine necessitated the ungrateful takeover of the landscape and aspects of heritage accumulated by the Palestinian population over many millennia—to fashion a veneer of nativity while expunging Palestinian continuity. The master plan to replace “Palestine” by “Israel” was implemented by expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and destruction or depopulation of more than 450 villages in 1947–49 (Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* [Inst. for Palestine Studies, 1992; print]; Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* [Oneworld, 2006; print]), and by policies de-

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signed to diminish any remaining “demographic threat” and to expand colonies. The Arab map was converted to a Hebrew map, mostly by translating indigenous names into Hebrew or inventing phonological or other “distortions of Arabic names” (Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948* [U of California P, 2000; print; 19; see also, e.g., 19–23, 35, 38–39]). In a little-known appropriation, Arabic, the live storehouse of ancient regional languages, was employed “to supplement the deficiencies of the Hebrew language,” according to committee records cited in Joshua Blau’s *The Renaissance of Modern Hebrew and Modern Standard Arabic* (U of California P, 1981; print; 32–33). (On appropriation and toponyms, see chs. 7 and 10 in my *Hidden Histories*.)

Reviving Hebrew differs from the hegemonic spread of French, English, and Spanish. Palestine endured layers of colonization: in ancient periods, then under Ottoman, later British (leaving English as postcolonial legacy), and now Israeli control. The isolated minority remaining in Israel learned the enforced new colonizer’s language under duress, to cope with martial rule and discriminatory structures. Mahmoud Darwish knew Hebrew as the language not only of some early friends but also of those who destroyed his ancestral village, of the police, judges, and jailers. His departure from classical poetic form came well after his exile in 1970 (though when I met him in Ramallah in 1996, he still considered himself in exile). That Palestinian poetry should be written in Arabic is hardly surprising, and it is uncertain how specifically it was, as Harrison maintains, “a vanguard . . . simultaneously political and aesthetic,” “effectively decolonizing Palestinian culture” (364, 363) when, first, so many self-colonizing elements remain and, second, the revolutionary qualities she ascribes to such poetry apply both to Palestinian writers unexposed to Hebrew and to Arab poets and writers in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and other countries who suffered state repression and for whom Palestine was and is the most fundamental issue.

Strangely, Albert Memmi is mentioned as a “mentor” of Abdelkebir Khatibi (354), and one

who “famously prophesied the death of franco-phone Maghrebi literature” (359). True, his early work reflects identity conflicts, and his 1957 *Portrait du colonisé* (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*) is part of (post)colonial discourse. But he did an about-face after getting a teaching post and French citizenship. In 2004 he produced *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, a work inconsistent with his previous ideas, as critics have observed, imbued with the air of Islamophobia and fear of immigrants that pervades the voices of those in power. Memmi regresses: he blames those who live the unwieldy confusions left by colonization. He attacks everything that is Arab and denies that Israel is a colonial state. Memmi belittles Iraqis for lamenting heritage destruction and museum looting following the United States’ invasion, repeating a Zionist myth about all Arabs as nomads from the peninsula unrelated to their ancient civilizations: “In what sense . . . are Chaldea and Sumer part of Arab memory, a people who, at the time, existed as no more than a handful of tribes in the Arabian peninsula?” (U of Minnesota P, 2006; print; 24–25, 95–96). To echo Frantz Fanon, “All such remarks are reminiscent in their aggressiveness of those so often heard coming from the settler’s lips” (*The Wretched of the Earth*; trans. Constance Farrington [Grove, 1963; print; 161]).

To get out of this “intractable” situation (Harrison 366), we need to go beyond regional applications and binaries, to expand Palestine’s meaning by adopting “methodologies” for “decolonizing the mind” of Israelis, Palestinians, and people East and West, to borrow from titles by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (*Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* [Zed, 1999; print]) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (*Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* [East African Educ., 1986; print]). With the changed character of the struggle, Israeli extremism on the rise, and the Palestinian Authority a postcolonial regime in the midst of colonization, alternative strategies must “bypass . . . traditional modes of thinking,” as Harrison suggests in quoting Fanon and Maghrebi writers (361). In its unraveling, the “impossible

metaphor” of Palestine, beyond merely “utopia” or “topos” in past struggles (365), can function more than ever as a universal epistemic figure.

“Holy Land” Palestine is central to Western religious belief and the colonizer’s claims system. Palestine has been the object and model of colonial projects—the Crusades, conquest of the Americas (as conquest of Canaan, the new promised land), South African apartheid, and Zionist ideology of “return” to “the land of ancestors.” Israel’s creation was facilitated by Western and Jewish assumptions about narratives that, though shown to be fictional, legendary, or copied myths, still entangle people as justifications or profitable investments. Most historians and archaeologists today (including some Israelis) no longer practice “biblical archaeology” or give any credence to stories like Exodus, conquest of Canaan, or Kingdom of David. Conversely, Palestinians as Muslims and Christians follow a shared religious tradition and so, in unfortunate self-colonization, accept as sacred the stories that cause their dispossession.

Yet Palestine is more than exile, dispossession, and yearning: it promises the prospect of uncovering particular workings of power, of expanded human consciousness, a new mental landscape. By relying on new knowledge and translating discoveries to heal a damaged legacy, the West might recognize how its politics has been shaped by self-interested preconception, Jews recover positive inclusive traditions, and Palestinians heal themselves of self-destructive (post)colonial ailments. To free habits of the mind can be challenging, however, though liberating.

Basem L. Ra’ad  
Al-Quds University

#### Reply:

I am grateful to Basem L. Ra’ad for his pertinent comments on “Cross-Colonial Poetics: *Souffles-Anfas* and the Figure of Palestine,” which give me the opportunity to clarify what

I am now calling “transcolonial identification” with Palestine: transnational forms of solidarity that are based on an understanding of Palestine as the product of a long and unfinished colonial history. In the longer project from which my article is excerpted, I analyze the work of Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian writers and intellectuals who have mobilized Palestine in order to critique French and Zionist/Israeli colonial discourses, often drawing unexpected parallels between them—despite the important historical differences emphasized by Ra’ad. For Abdellatif Laâbi, a cofounder and co-editor in chief of the Moroccan journals *Souffles* and *Anfas* (1966–71) as well as the first translator of Palestinian poetry in the Maghreb, Palestine epitomized the colonial experience of deculturation, by which indigenous languages and cultural forms were supplanted by those of the colonizer. Because France practiced the art of assimilation (a euphemism for deculturation) more extensively than Great Britain and applied it more forcefully in the Maghreb, and especially Algeria, than in its Levantine protectorates (Syria and Lebanon), Maghrebi poets were particularly well positioned to understand and translate what, following Ghassan Kanafani and Frantz Fanon, Laâbi dubbed Palestinian combat poetry (*La poésie palestinienne de combat* [Atlantes, 1970; print]). To take another example, the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine and his popular theater troupe staged plays that compared Algerian migrant workers to Palestinian colonial subjects to shore up the parallels between, on the one hand, French colonial assimilationist policies (“Algeria is France,” as the famous phrase had it) and discourses of postcolonial hospitality (in which France played the role of “host” to its former colonial subjects—see Mireille Rosello’s *Postcolonial Hospitality* [Stanford UP, 2001; print]) and, on the other, Zionist discourses of separation opposing Jews and Arabs. Kateb’s play *Mohamed prends ta valise* (1971; “Mohamed, Take Your Suitcase”) reveals that the French myth of assimilation elides the differential processes



aimed at segmenting the indigenous population into, among other categories, Arabs, Jews, and Berbers—divide-and-rule policies that were implemented in the eastern Mediterranean with the devastating effects that we know (Seuil, 1999; print; 205–370). As Ra’ad points out, the Tunisian theorist of colonialism Albert Memmi, who in his early work evoked the colonial “pyramid of petty tyrants” dividing Muslims, Jews, and Europeans (*The Colonizer and the Colonized* [Beacon, 1967; print; 17]), later espoused Zionism as a liberationist ideal on a par with anticolonial nationalism. In my analysis of his writings, however, I show that even in his most pro-Israeli writings, he inadvertently draws parallels between “Arab Jews” and Palestinians—albeit to advocate for the assimilation of “Arabs” in Israel. While Memmi cannot be said to establish transcolonial *identification* with Palestine, transcolonial comparison is at work even in his pro-Zionist writings.

Ra’ad is right to stress some of the differences between the European colonial “civilizing mission” (which, I would add, varied greatly between the French and British contexts and within both empires) and the cultural and historical claims of political Zionism. It is true, of course, that indigenous populations in the Maghreb were not forcibly removed, as they were in historical Palestine (Ilan Pappé characterizes the eviction of some 800,000 Palestinians as a clear case of ethnic cleansing, in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* [Oneworld, 2006; print])—though striking parallels remain between French colonization of the Maghreb, especially its prized settler colony Algeria, and the Zionist takeover of Palestine. Though my focus remains *representations* of Palestine (why have Maghrebi writers identified with Palestine, and to what effects?), it does seem worth interrogating some of the overlapping claims of colonialism and political Zionism, as scholars such as Ella Shohat, Joseph Massad, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Ra’ad himself have done. Such a comparative move makes clear not only the colonial genealogy of the current predicament of Palestine—whose fate was clinched in Brit-

ish and French negotiations with the nascent Zionism movement early in the last century—but also the continued colonial character of Israeli control over Palestinian lives and the very possibility of Palestinian political existence. As Edward Said tirelessly reminded us, political Zionism was also a liberation project whose stated aim was to provide refuge for a persecuted minority. But as Said, Massad, Shohat, and others have shown, the discourse of political Zionism emerged at the heyday of European colonialism, borrowing the mantle of the civilizing mission and many of the methods of colonial rule for its own purposes. To linger on the example of the *Nakba*, or “catastrophe,” as the mass dispossession of 1948 is known in Arabic, Shohat has argued that it presents startling similarities to the eviction of Native American peoples from their lands by foreign settlers, as does the renaming of towns evoked by Ra’ad. Similarly, the ubiquitous tropes of “making the desert bloom” and civilizing violent, fanatic, and overly fertile “natives” are common fare in European colonial and Zionist discourse. As Raz-Krakotzkin has argued, Israel’s representations of its “Arab” (i.e., Palestinian) citizens bear strong resemblances to xenophobic discourse in Europe, which is largely inherited from colonial racial discourse, and the distinction between Israeli citizens (including “Arabs”) and nationals (who must be Jewish) is hauntingly reminiscent of the citizen-subject divide in the colonies, and particularly in Algeria, which was considered an integral part of France. What Ra’ad calls the “Hebraizing [of] Palestine” finds a striking parallel in various processes of *francisation* in the Maghreb, including attempts to recuperate a Greco-Roman (hence French, by way of Latin) North African past; the perpetuation of the “Kabyle myth,” according to which the indigenous peoples of the Maghreb were originally European; and the relegation of Arabic to the status of a foreign language in Algeria.

As the ongoing upheavals across the southern Mediterranean show, Palestine remains a topos and utopia in the region (see Samar Yazbek’s harrowing memoir of the Syrian revolution, *A Woman in the Crossfire* [Haus, 2012;

print]) but also worldwide (e.g., the growing BDS [boycott, divestment, and sanctions] movement). In an increasingly precarious situation where Palestinian life and political existence are every day more threatened, the stakes of trans-colonial identification are higher than ever.

Olivia C. Harrison  
University of Southern California

### Misquoting Benjamin

TO THE EDITOR:

Probably Walter Benjamin has no one to blame but himself, but quotations from his books show up in the strangest places with much stranger meanings. His fault or not, it is surely significant whether we are being just to those fine phrases. The possibility of injustice arises whenever we attach an idea to someone else's name and thereby borrow some authority for our own. It may be as significant as the way we attach evidence to an accused person before the law. In either case, quotation can veer off into a dangerous misuse. How we deal with books usually reveals the way we deal with people. Fracking a piece of language out of a book and burning it up as fuel to drive our own argument should not count as just representation, and yet it is standard practice. I wonder whether we might not want to change that practice. As Heine noted a long time ago, "Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen" ("Where they burn books, they will one day burn people too").

Benjamin, of course, could play rather fast and loose with quotations himself, and he had his own ideas about re-creating texts to support his purposes. In his essay on Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), Benjamin wrote that the sun never appeared over the gloomily lit landscape in which the story unfolds ("Goethe's *Elective Affinities*"; *Selected Writings*; vol. 1 [Belknap-Harvard UP, 1996; print; 303]). Yet Goethe built his story around three dramatic appearances of the sun,

and most of the novel's events occur under normal conditions, including bright skies on spring days. Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" cites the close of a short story by Johann Peter Hebel, "Unverhofftes Wiedersehen" ("Unexpected Reunion"), to support his contention about the place of death in storytelling. The protagonist, an old woman, "is called away by death," as Benjamin puts it (*Selected Writings*; vol. 3 [Belknap-Harvard UP, 2002; print; 152]). But Hebel's text does not end with death. The actual close provides a quite different meaning. The story ends as the speaker, having made a remark about commitments and obligations in life, turns away from her betrothed's graveside and returns to the realm of the living (*Sämtliche Schriften*; vol. 2 [Müller, 1990; print; 284]).

Benjamin marks the significance of death as the point from which even the humblest life acquires the vivid enclosure that permits it to be retold, and from which a moral may be drawn. That is the basis on which he offers his conception of the "authority of death" that accrues to the storyteller, that most modest of speakers, the figure in whom the righteous man encounters himself.

How different, then, the pomp and excess of a national event dressed up for maximum effect by the political heirs to the most powerful leader in the western hemisphere, the funeral of a man who had led a nation through a horrific war. We pause, rapt, and take a sharp breath reading Walt Whitman's noble poem "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd," and we could just leave it at that; yet Simon Gikandi has not left it at that when he invokes Benjamin's name in his editor's column "From Penn Station to Trenton: The Language Train" (128.4 [2013]: 865-71). The righteous man's perspective might alert us to the fate of the vast authority that President Lincoln had wielded in his life. It might make us pause again, give us time to hatch the suspicion that putting his coffin on display during its long journey through the country he had led transfigured his mortal remains into a motif in



another kind of story—a history to which Benjamin’s words bring a different meaning. Was that object transformed into something closer to a cultural treasure, the kind of object that, as Benjamin points out so astutely in the seventh thesis of his “On the Concept of History,” was always carried along in triumphal processions and used to draw the powers of empathy into the service of the victors (*Selected Writings*; vol. 4 [Belknap–Harvard UP, 2003; print; 391])?

The tale of misleading quotations from Benjamin meanders away to grow as long as the pinacles of his prose rise high. In her book on the demise of comparative literature, Gayatri Spivak cites a “lovely aside” Benjamin makes in his essay “Critique of Violence” to invest her way of teaching emancipation with a little of his weight (*Death of a Discipline* [Columbia UP, 2003; print; 33]). In its original context, the line notes the absence of any law in Germany restraining schoolteachers from battering their pupils. One might want to glance briefly into the ash and shadow surrounding the authority of a man who developed the concept of a “pure, divine violence” and whose criticism of Goethe’s novel practiced a “sublime violence” in the name of God for the purpose of “shattering it into a thing of shards” (“Critique of Violence”; *Selected Writings*; vol. 1 [Belknap–Harvard UP, 1996; print; 252]). So far in history we have not seen any violence that is divine, even when it is just, and it may well be that we never shall. Extracting fragments from testimony to make a point contrary to the statement in which they appear is also a form of violence. We need, surely, to reflect on how far we should go with that, do we not?

Marcus Bullock

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

## Why Do Research?

### TO THE EDITOR:

The question “why do research?” echoes the title of Mark Edmundson’s recent book *Why*

*Teach? In Defense of a Real Education* (Bloomsbury USA, 2013; Nook file). Edmundson admirably advocates for an education that matters but is in short supply in the corporate university. Unfortunately, he repeats the cultural truism that “scholarly work . . . has precious little to do with the fundamentals of teaching” (54). In a review of *Why Teach?*, “How Four Years Can (and Should) Transform You,” Michael S. Roth picks up this line of argument in opposing “esoteric research” to the real pedagogical work of higher education (*The New York Times*; New York Times, 20 Aug. 2013; Web; 17 Jan. 2014). However, for many gifted and committed teachers, research and teaching cannot and should not be separated. That’s a lesson we should be professing to colleagues, administrators, and the general public. Interestingly, many of the students most invested in acquiring a real education rather than a résumé have already learned that lesson.

I was honored to receive a university-wide award for distinguished teaching the same year that my first book was published. The proximity of those two events was no coincidence. It’s easy to see the connection between teaching and research when we teach upper-level, specialized courses in our areas of expertise—that is, when our research directly feeds our teaching. Our ambitious research agendas enable us to answer seemingly random—and sometimes off-the-wall—questions with an impromptu mini-lecture, often complete with recommendations for further reading. Our scholarly pursuits provide an extra level of class preparation every day.

What’s not so obvious is that many of us are empathetic but demanding writing teachers in first-year general education courses because we have ambitious research agendas. We regularly wrestle with difficult arguments and why they matter; we dance and battle with the written word; we revise and edit; we recast arguments so that they are sharper and clearer and take into account additional evidence. So we respect our young students’ struggles with

the writing process because we share them. But while we identify with students as writers, we hold them to high standards and don't let them off the hook—in large part because we don't let ourselves off the hook.

At my liberal arts institution, our university-wide teaching awards are initiated by student nominations, followed up by careful review of teaching portfolios by a committee of faculty members from diverse disciplines. Most of the winners of these awards are accomplished scholars who are also rigorous, passionate teachers rather than classroom entertainers; most of the student nominators are intellectually ambitious and committed students. As these nominators know or intuit, quality research and quality teaching often go together as readily as love and marriage (gay or straight).

Of course, some university professors disdain teaching in favor of "their own work." Anyone with a PhD and many with a bachelor's degree have sat through excruciating courses in which scholars taught their own books without any regard for the students in front of them. I remember a graduate course that was supposed to be a survey of early American literature. Instead, I was required to read not one but four novels by James Fenimore Cooper and produce an annotated bibliography of Cooper criticism. That professor was using his students as his research assistants rather than providing them with the education they needed to become accomplished teacher-scholars. That faux educator has served as a monitory story throughout

my career. In sharp contrast, Susan Gubar, one of my mentors, has been a positive and powerful role model as a prolific scholar, a public intellectual, *and* a demanding, inspiring teacher.

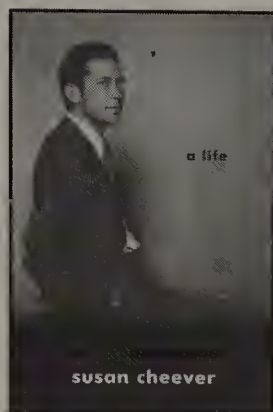
Notably, the biographical note at the end of *Why Teach?* describes the author as a "prize-winning scholar." In one of the book's more arresting essays, Edmundson argues that a real education requires us to slow down in a world that tweets us away from the present into the next possibility ("Dwelling in Possibilities" [32–48]). He positively counterpoints his summer of writing five drafts of a book chapter with a student's summer filled with unreflective, ADD-like activity. Despite Edmundson's claims to the contrary, his scholarly work and the habits of being they engender have much to do with the fundamentals of teaching that he professes.

When we think—or are taught to think—that research and teaching are opposing activities, we encourage competition between professors and students, to the detriment of both groups and to higher education. My own experiences as a teacher, as a scholar, and as a student suggest that we are all better served when we bring teaching and research productively together rather than pit them against each other. To do so, we must recognize the direct and the indirect value of the scholarly enterprise to the sacred art of teaching. To be or not to be a scholar is the wrong question for higher educators.

*Helene Meyers*  
Southwestern University



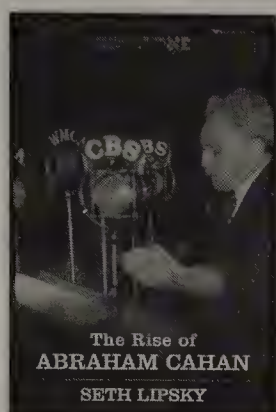
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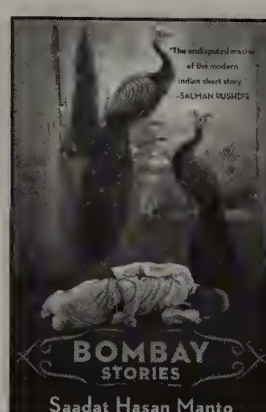
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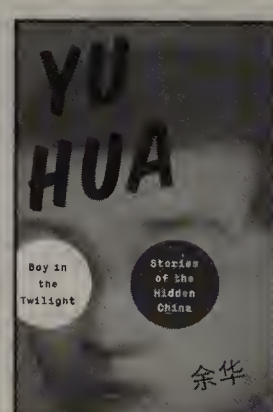


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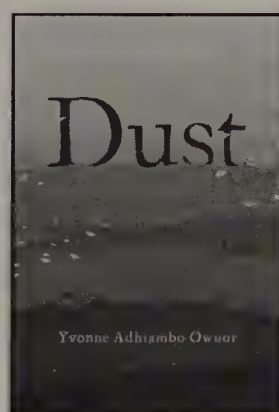
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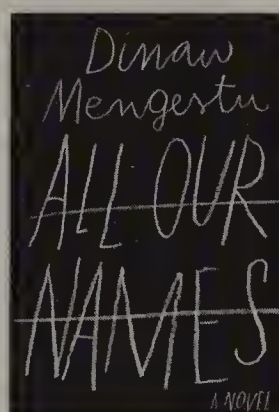
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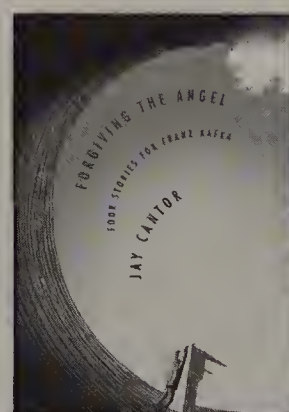
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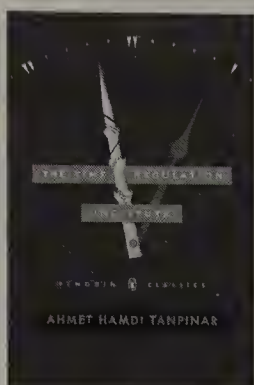


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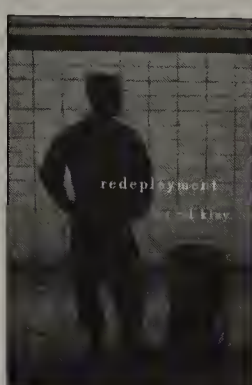
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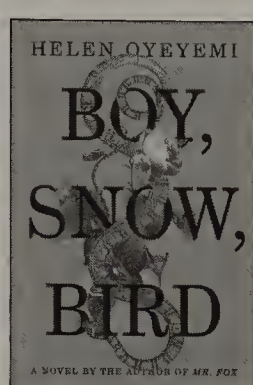
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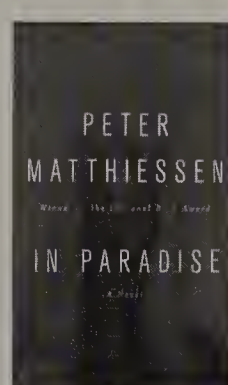


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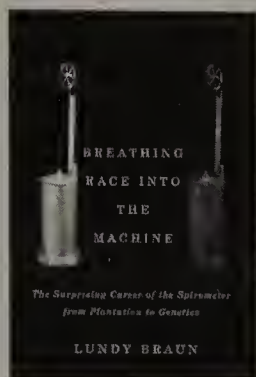
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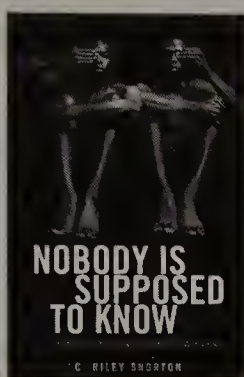
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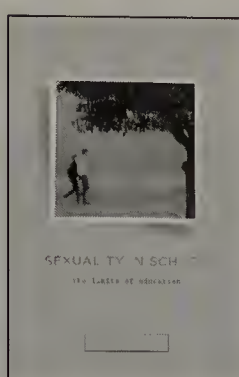
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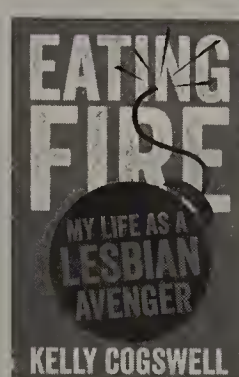
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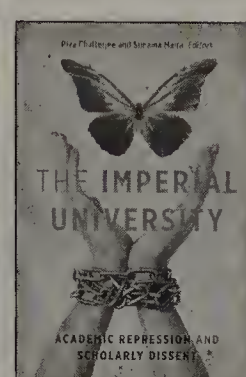
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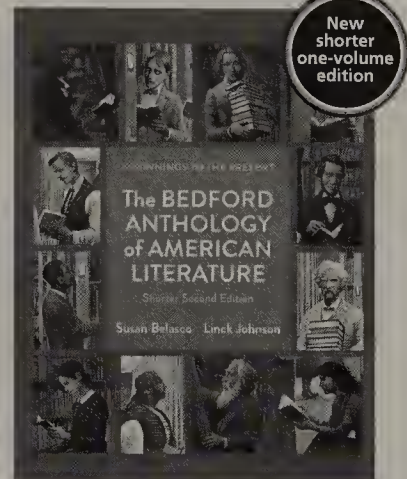
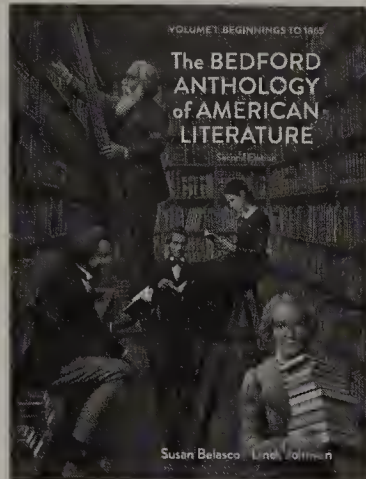
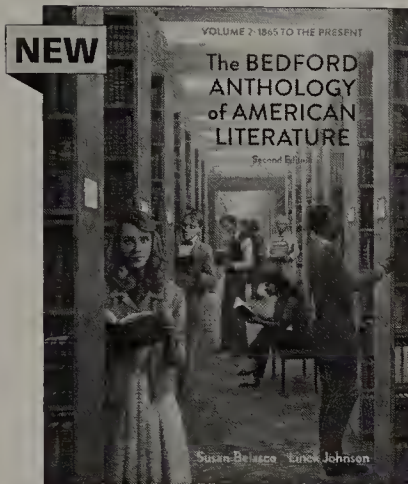
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307	American Literatures Initiative
Cover II, 287, 288–89	Bedford / St. Martin's
298	Bloomsbury
290–91	Cambridge University Press
Cover III	University of Chicago Press
305	Columbia University Press
308–09	Dalkey Archive Press
295	University of Illinois Press
296	International Baccalaureate
303	Johns Hopkins University Press
281	Knopf Doubleday Academic
298	McGill-Queen's University Press
285	University of Minnesota Press
310, Cover IV	MLA Publications
306	Northwestern University Master of Arts Programs in Liberal Studies and Literature
310	Ohio State University Press
294	Owlworks
293	Oxford University Press
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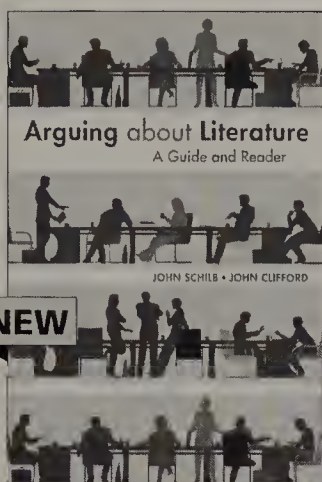
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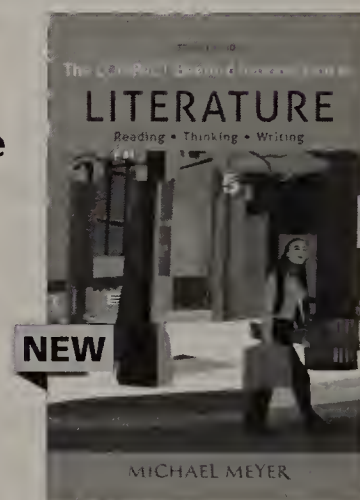
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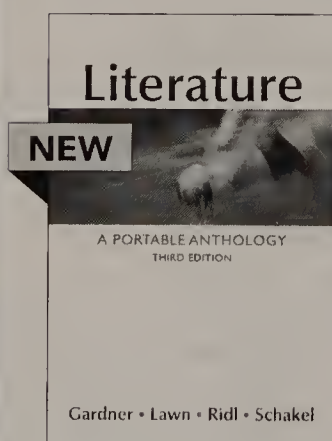
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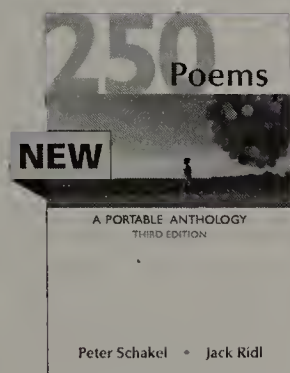
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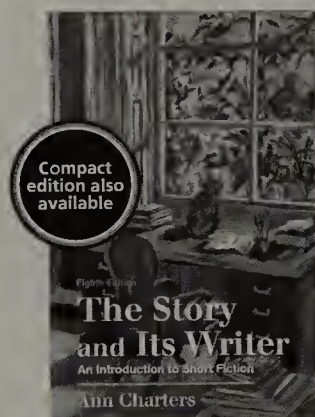
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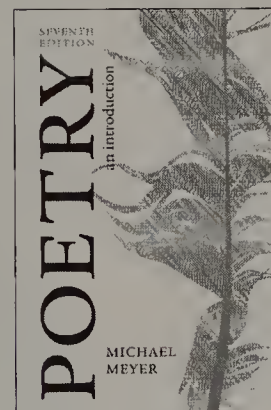
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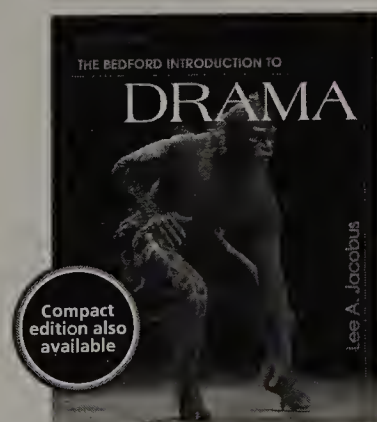
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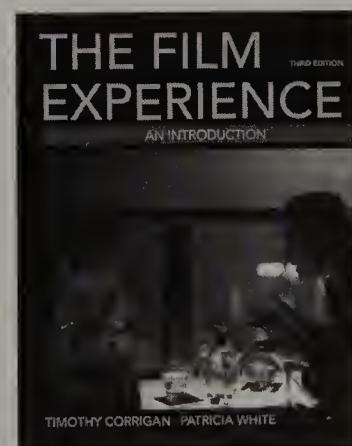
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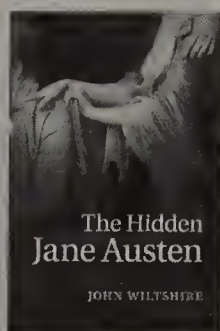
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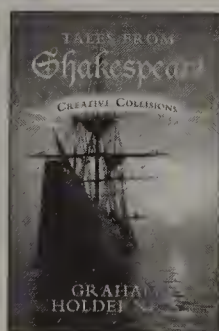


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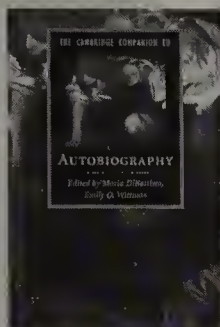


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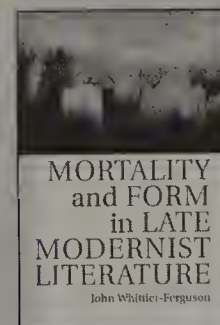
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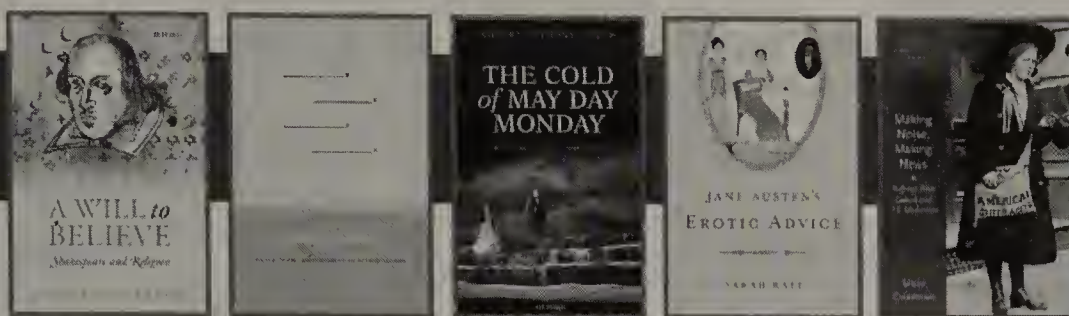
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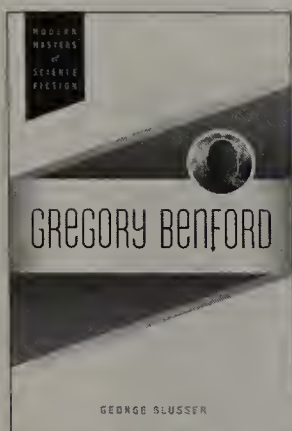
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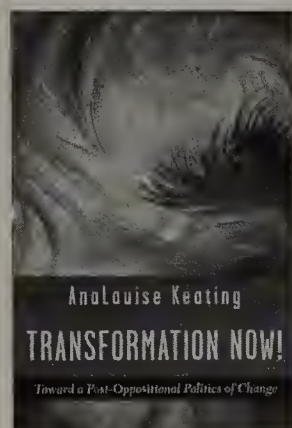
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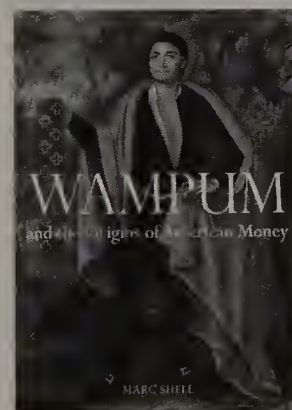
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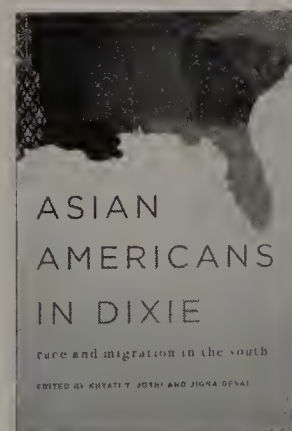


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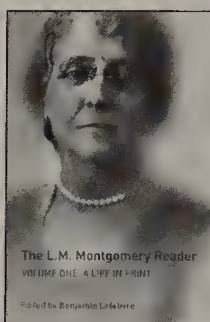
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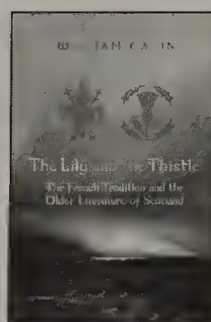


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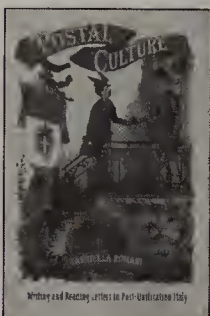


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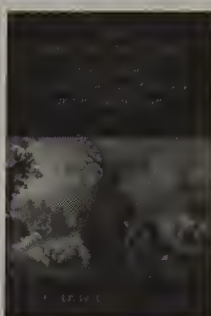


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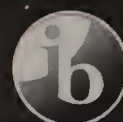
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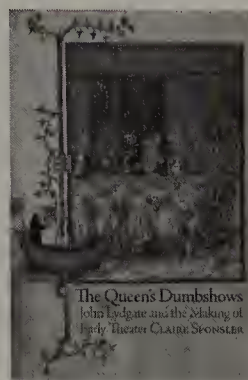
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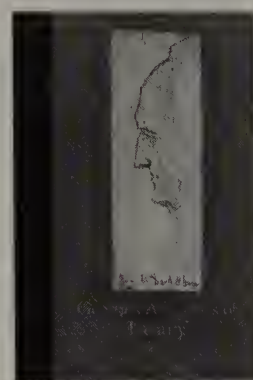
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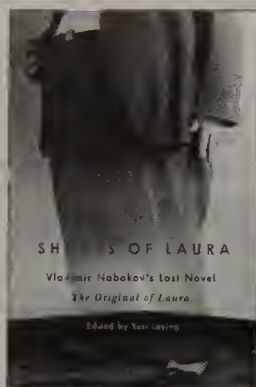
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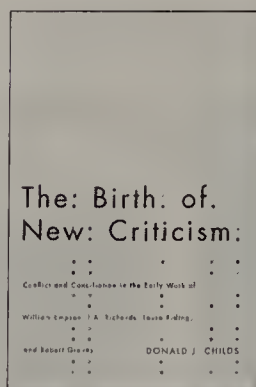
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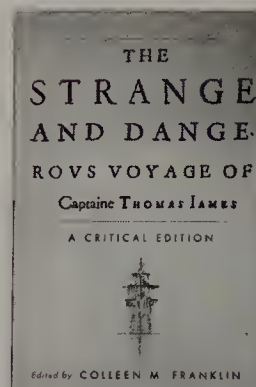
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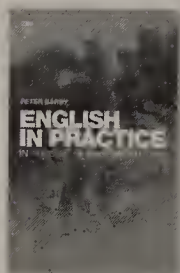
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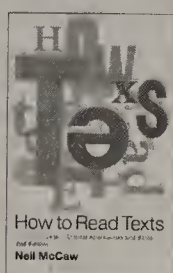
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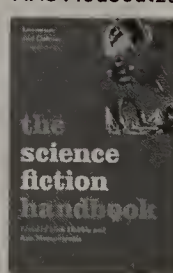
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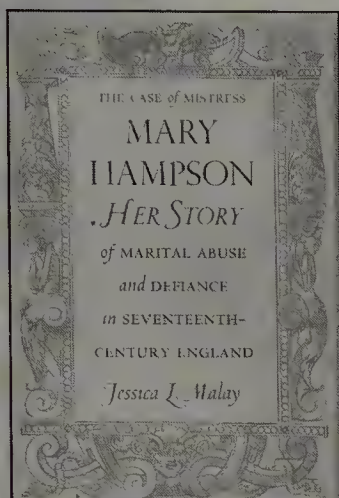


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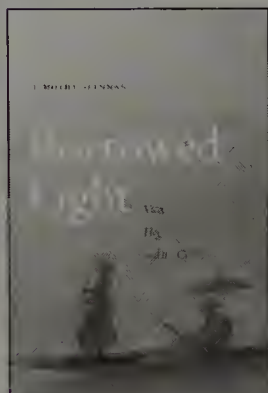
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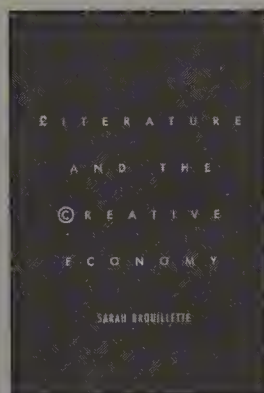


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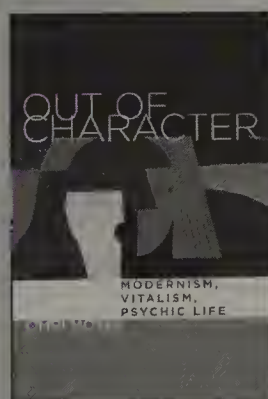
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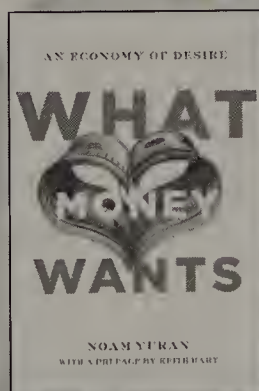


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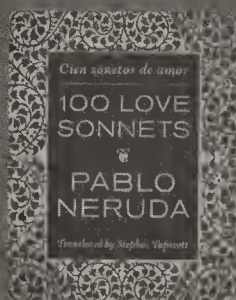
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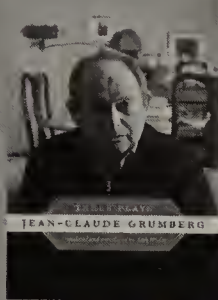
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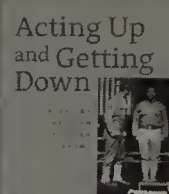
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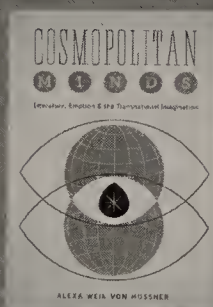
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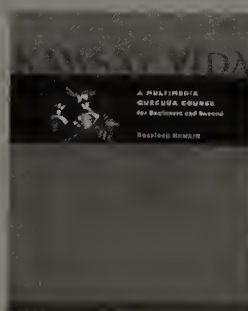
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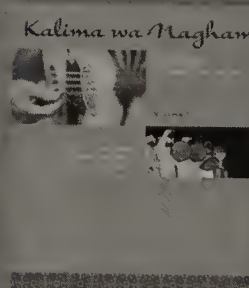
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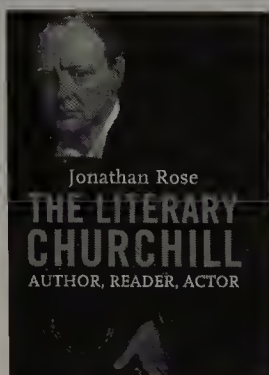
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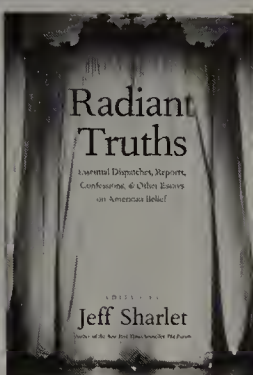
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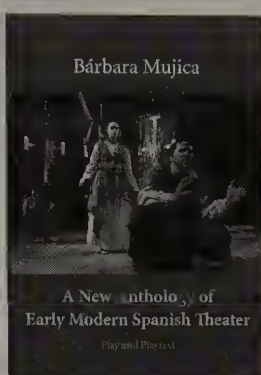
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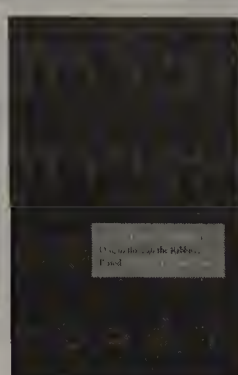


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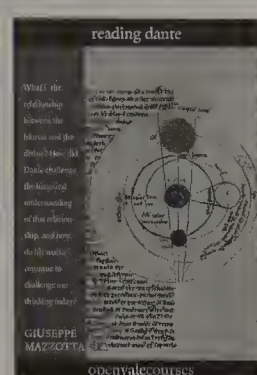
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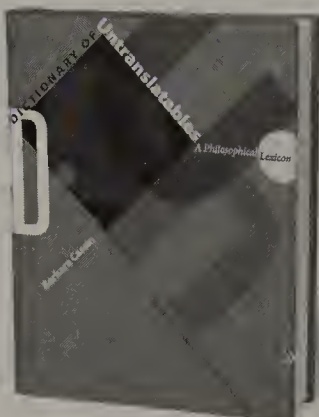
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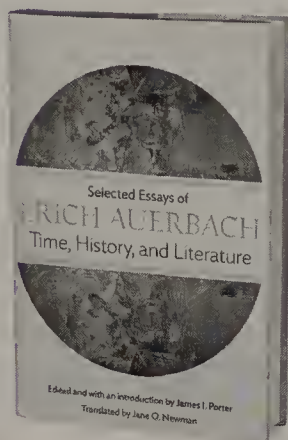
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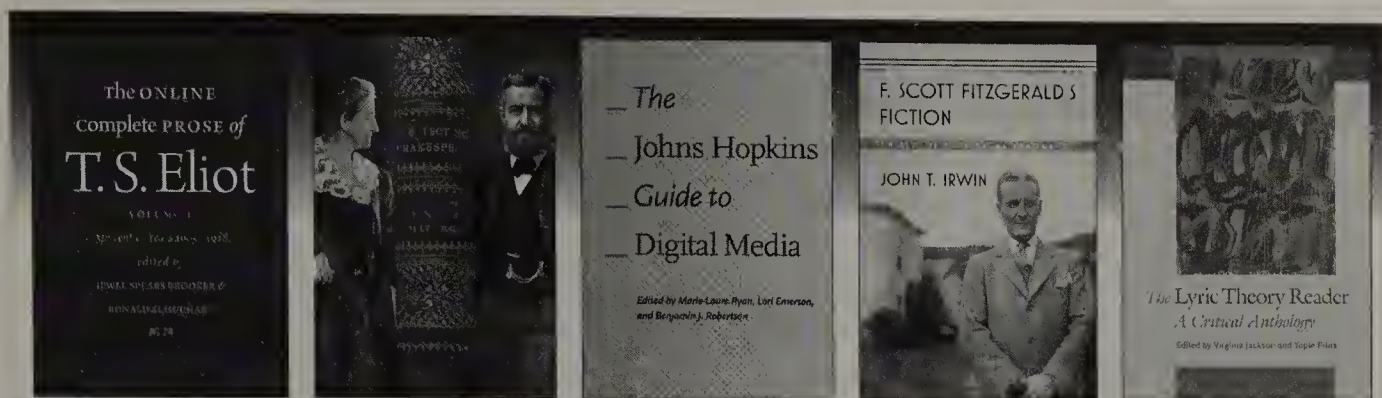
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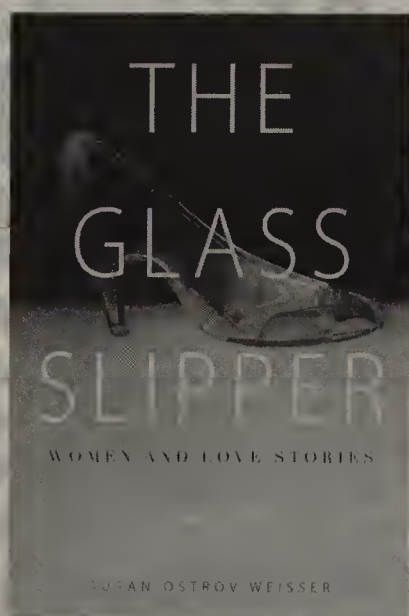
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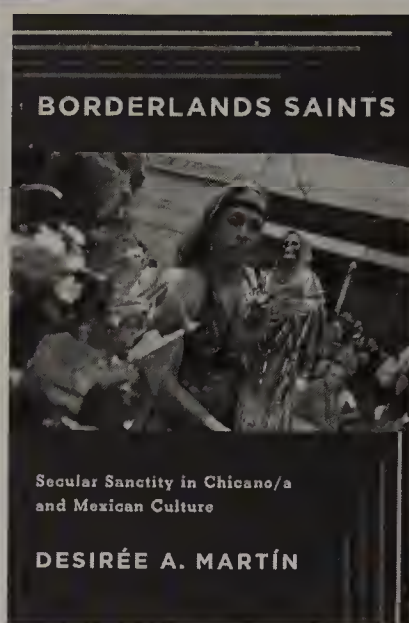
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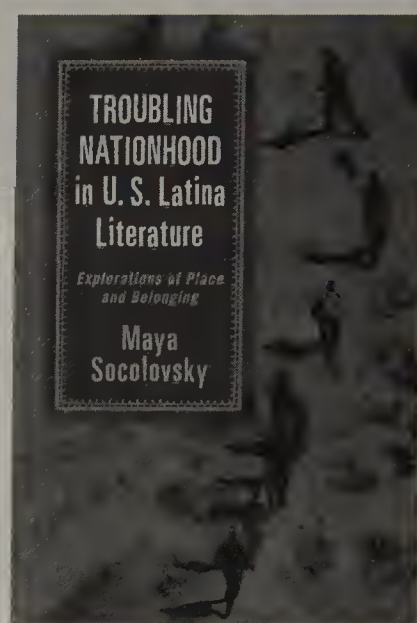


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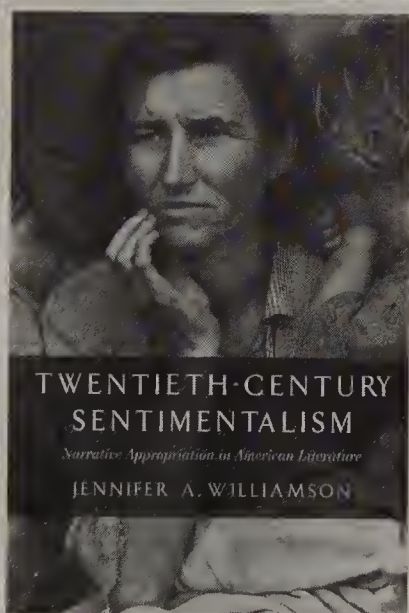


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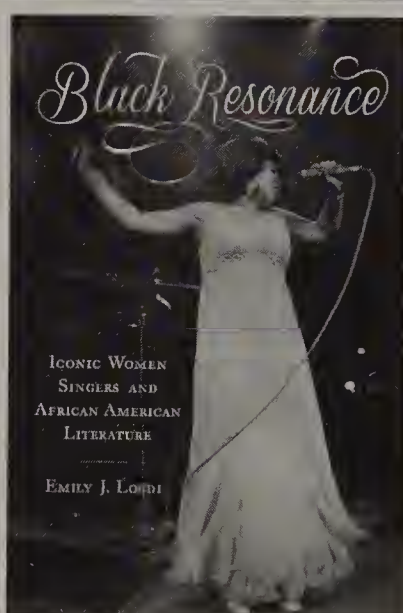


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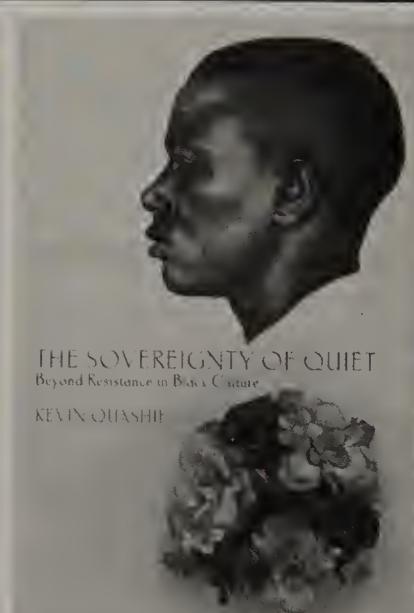
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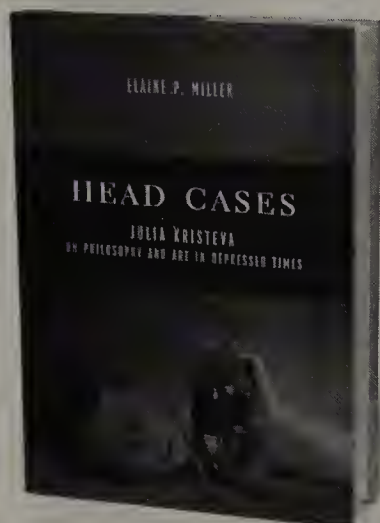
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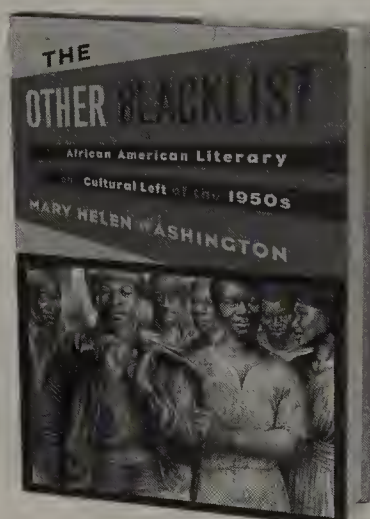
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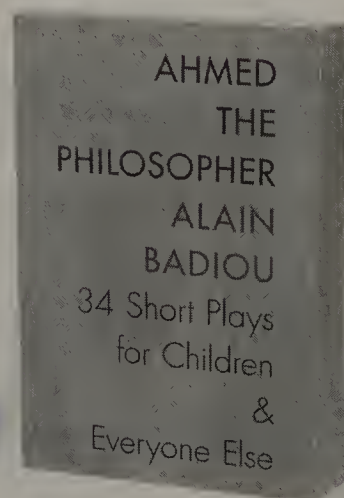
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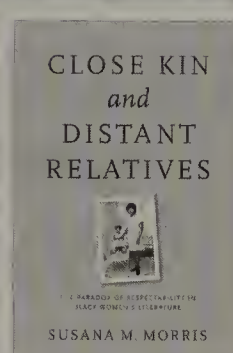
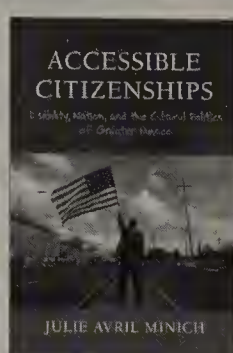
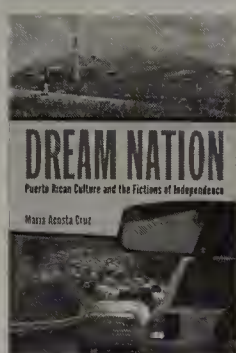
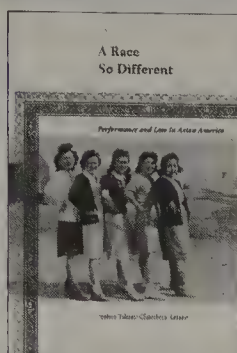
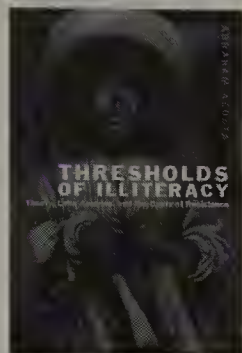




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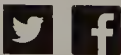
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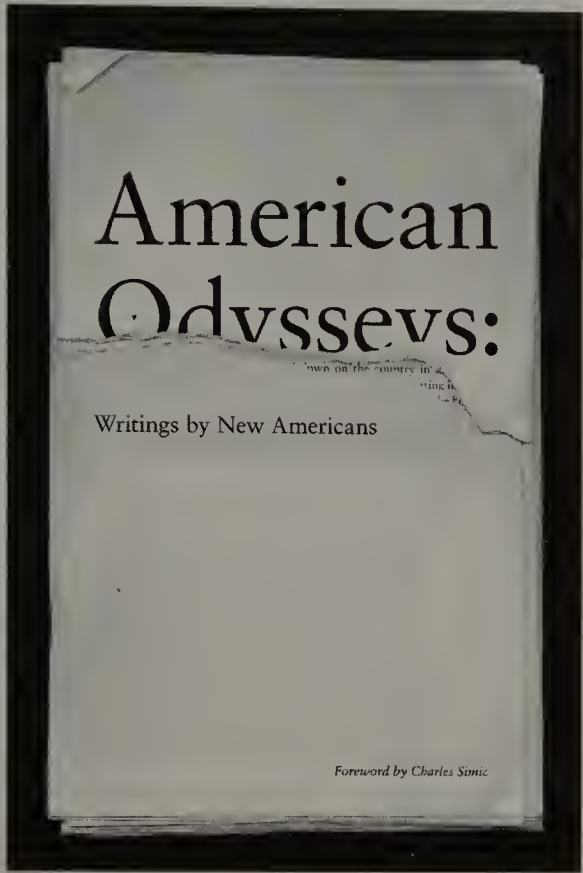
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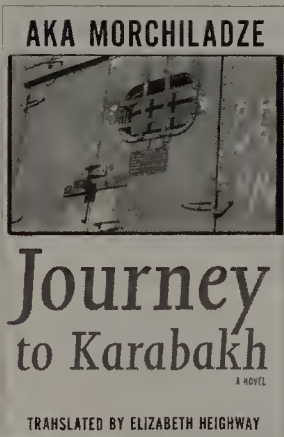




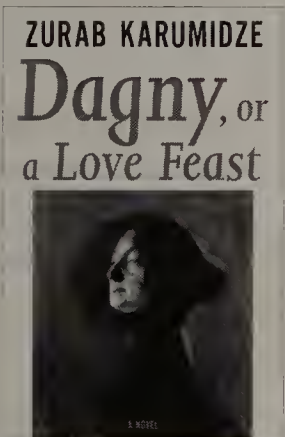
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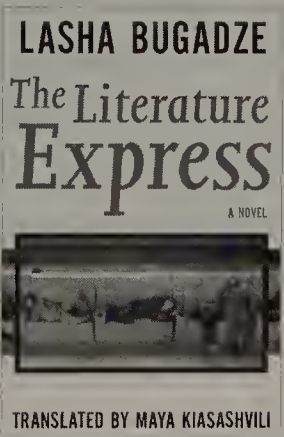
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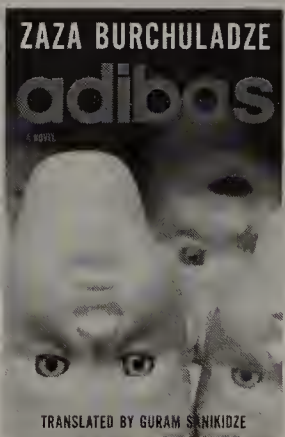
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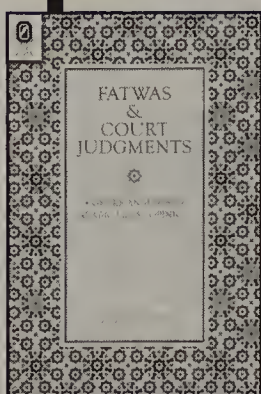
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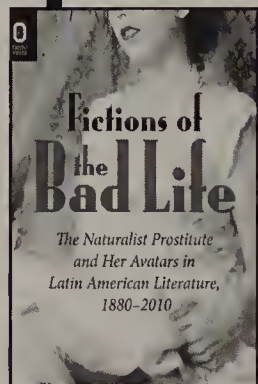
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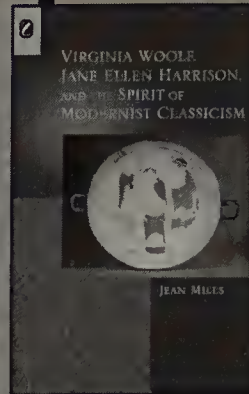
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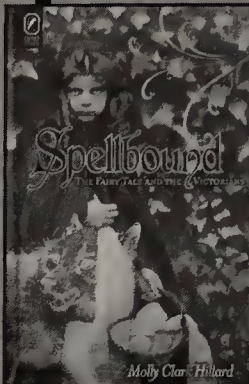
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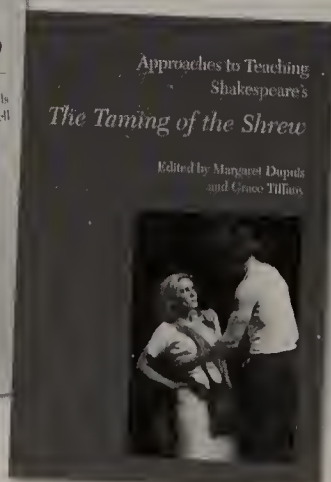
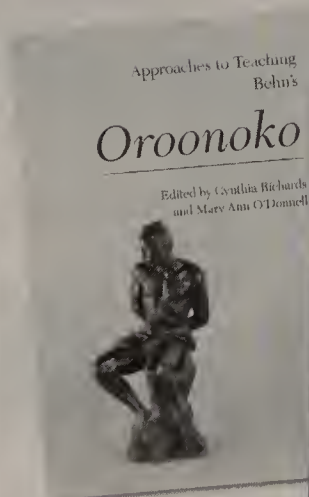
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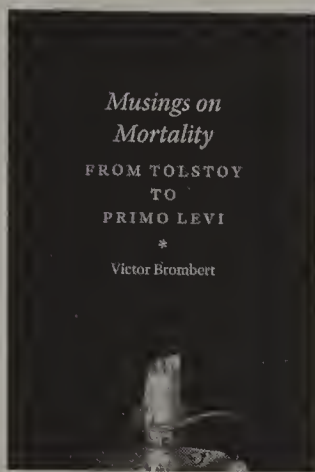
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- 188 **Reena Sastri**, *Louise Glück's Twenty-First-Century Lyric*  
This essay examines a contemporary poetics that implicitly challenges prevailing critiques of lyric as asocial, monologic, and naively self-expressive. Louise Glück practices a lyric mode whose plainspoken surface and emotional immediacy belie its metalinguistic and metafictional complexity. Her poems' illocutionary structures and their attunement to everyday grammatical nuance convey an understanding of language as situational, context-dependent shared action, an understanding that chimes with the insights of ordinary-language philosophy. The perspectives offered by Glück's work can fruitfully complicate dominant models of lyric and binary narratives of American poetic history that set lyric voice against philosophical ambition and linguistic innovation. (RS)
- 204 **Pansy Duncan**, *Taking the Smooth with the Rough: Texture, Emotion, and the Other Postmodernism*  
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- 223 **Loren Glass**, *Zuckerman/Roth: Literary Celebrity between Two Deaths*  
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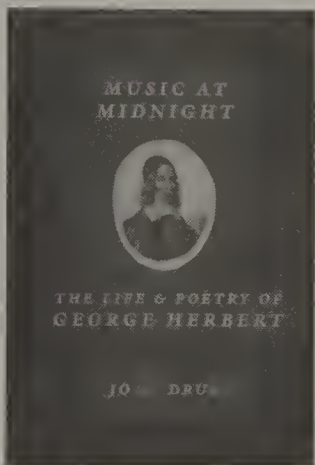


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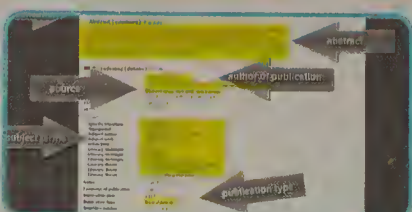
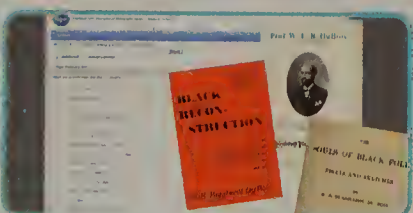
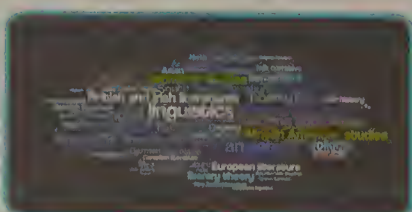
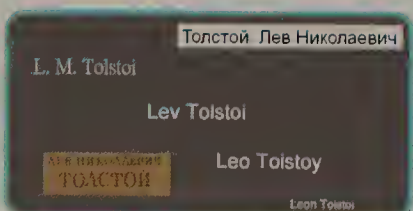
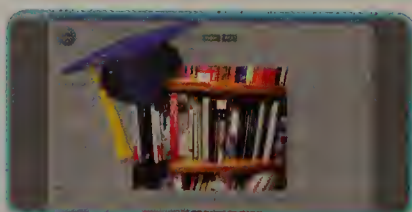
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During, Jean Franco, Forest Pyle,  
and Jenny Sharpe. Response by  
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*

*Criticism in Translation*  
Mikhail Bakhtin. "Bakhtin on  
Shakespeare." Translation and  
introduction by Sergey Sandler